[Translation Dutch / English]

Intermediary Foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

REGISTERED
Minister of Social Affairs and Employment SZW His Excellency Drs. M.L.J. Paul
PO Box 90801
2509 LV, THE HAGUE

Mierlo, 15 January 2026

Subject: Your cover letter draft annual plan 2026 SZW Your Excellency,
I request that you take this letter into account in your 2026 annual planning.
Introduction to the foundation
The IFUD or Human Rights foundation (where IFUD stands for Intermediary Foundation for Universal Declarations) positions itself as a critical watchdog and intermediary in the field of the rule of law and fundamental freedoms in the Netherlands and beyond. In public communication the foundation may also use the name: Intermediary Foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Below is a concise summary of the role and vision of this foundation:

1. Role as an Intermediary
   The name "Intermediary" emphasizes that the foundation serves as a bridge between the abstract Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the everyday reality of the citizen. The foundation is, however, not a welfare agency or legal help desk; it does not resolve individual cases, but provides "tools" and frameworks so that citizens themselves gain insight into their legal position.

2. Critique of the Dutch Rule of Law

A central point in IFUD's recent activities is the "counter-investigation" prompted by the report The Broken Promise of the Rule of Law (June 2024) from the State Commission on the Rule of Law. IFUD critically analyzes whether the government still effectively protects its citizens against abuse of power.

3. Publications and Education

The foundation disseminates its findings mainly through analyses and e-books.

• Focus: The connection between social issues (such as care, housing and education) and the legal frameworks of the rule of law.

• Availability: Publications can be found on platforms such as Brave New Books and ResearchGate, where they publish reports on the state of democracy.

4. Broad Interpretation of Rights

IFUD interprets the statute in the "broadest sense of the word." This means that they not only look at classical civil liberties (freedom of expression), but also emphasize the indivisibility of rights:

• Economic and social rights: Right to work, food and health.

• International order: The pursuit of a society in which the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can actually be realized.

Conclusion: IFUD or Human Rights functions as a platform that encourages citizens to engage in critical citizenship, with the Universal Declaration as a moral and legal compass. The key points are:

• Tools for citizens: The foundation offers frameworks and insights so that citizens can better understand how the rule of law functions. It is not a desk for individual problems, but a resource for general understanding.

• Critical analysis of power: Through counter-investigation (including, among other things, the report of the State Commission on the rule of law from 2024) the foundation tests whether the government still sufficiently guarantees citizens' fundamental rights — such as healthcare, education and freedom.
• Intermediary role: The name emphasizes that the foundation forms an intermediate step; it provides the outlines by which citizens can bridge the gap between abstract human rights and everyday administrative reality.
• Publication of findings: Through e-books and reports on platforms such as Internet Archive and Brave New Books, the foundation shares its analyses of the relationship between the state and the citizen. Audio is also available on Spotify, Apple and various international streaming services.

In short: a foundation focused on providing insight into the rule of law, with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as its basis — in the broadest sense of the word — for a just society. The project "Hitler's Inferno" is important as the lesson of yesterday, a warning for the future.

The legal actions of Van den Wittenboer

In 1994 J.P. van den Wittenboer, chairman of the Intermediary Foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, began a legal battle against the Dutch State. After various bodies, including the Health and Youth Care Inspectorate and the National Ombudsman, failed to take his reports of abuses seriously, he had an official charge notarized on 21 January 1994.

He accused the State of corruption, fraud and making false statements within the medical world, politics and the legal profession. After the Public Prosecution Service refused to pursue prosecution and media such as Panorama halted their publications, he filed his complaint with the European Commission of Human Rights.

Key points from the book: "One man's death is another man's bread!"

In his 1994 book Van den Wittenboer paints a critical picture of Dutch society:

- Medical abuses (iatrogenesis): The author argues that healthcare has degenerated into an industry that harms patients more than it heals. Inspired by Ivan Illich, he contends that the system creates unnecessary dependency and functions as a means of social control.
- Institutional corruption: He claims there is widespread abuse of power within the judiciary, healthcare, the police (including the IRT affair) and politics.
- Political criticism: Specific attacks are directed at then-Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers. The accusations range from the “pension theft” at the ABP and the use of substitute judges to fraud at the Council of Europe. The policies of State Secretary Hans Simons (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport) regarding nursing homes and the Remmelink Report on euthanasia are also criticized.
- Social context: The indictment coincides with a turbulent period in the 1990s, marked by cuts in healthcare, fierce protests by elderly people against the freezing of the state pension (AOW) by Elco Brinkman (CDA), and the resulting rise of the General Elderly Union (AOV).

Van den Wittenboer argues that the institutions that should protect citizens actually exploit them for their own gain. The information provided paints a mistrustful picture of the government:

- Systemic decay: The author claims the rule of law is in decline because of corruption within politics, the legal profession and the judiciary. In particular, he questions the independence of the judiciary.
- Political scandals: In addition to the ABP issue, alleged moral lapses and secret relationships are cited to discredit the political leadership.
- Care as an instrument of control: The medical system is seen as a means of power. Budget cuts and incidents involving medication errors in nursing homes are presented by the author as evidence that healthcare oppresses citizens rather than supports them.

Conclusion: The work presents a dystopian picture in which the government, healthcare and the legal system no longer serve the citizen, but function as instruments for self-enrichment and oppression.

The structural exclusion of human rights organizations and political opponents in the Netherlands

The Dutch state is accused of systematically marginalizing the "Foundation Intermediary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" for decades. Despite the legal duty to protect such organizations, the Dutch government, together with its chain partners, through cronyism does the exact opposite. Political opponents and human rights defenders are deliberately sidelined.

This problem is deeply rooted in society. Citizens who object to injustice become entangled in an impenetrable web of dysfunctional complaint bodies, heavy burdens of proof and exhausting legal procedures up to the Supreme Court. Where criminal (and other) law is intended to protect the vulnerable, it appears in the Netherlands primarily to serve the economic and political elite.

As soon as whistleblowers expose power structures, the system closes ranks. This points to a "deep state" dynamic in which the established order maintains the status quo at the expense of democratic due process. The benefits scandal ("toeslagenaffaire") and the gas extraction in Groningen are only the vanguard of a deeper, structural pattern in which commercial interests are systematically placed above human rights.

Formal acknowledgment of receipt (13 September 1995) Municipality of The Hague Subject: Acknowledgment of receipt of letter on social rights Date: 13 September 1995 Our reference: [Reference]
Your letter of: 5 September 1995
Dear Mr. Van den Wittenboer,
On behalf of the Mayor I hereby confirm receipt of your letter of 5 September.
As the contents of your letter fall under the responsibility of the alderman for Education, Social Affairs, Employment Projects and Integration and Emancipation Policy, I have forwarded your letter to that alderman for further handling.
For further information you can contact the alderman's secretariat at telephone number (070) 353 2650.
Yours sincerely, W.L. Donkers
Office of the Municipal Secretary
Substantive response from the alderman (28 September 1995) Municipality of The Hague Subject: Reply to letter dated 5 September 1995 Date: 28 September 1995 Our reference: SZW95123
Dear Mr. Van den Wittenboer,
I have read your letter of 5 September and the enclosed documents with interest.
In your letter you indicate that you are registered in The Hague. In response, I have verified your details, since a fixed place of residence or domicile is a legal requirement for support under the General Assistance Act. This law stipulates that the municipality in which a person actually resides is responsible for providing assistance to individuals who do not have a minimum income.

Research has shown that you are not (any longer) registered in the Municipal Personal Records Database of The Hague and are not actually residing there. For that reason, the municipality of The Hague cannot grant you financial assistance. I advise you to contact the municipality where you are currently actually residing.
If you are leading a vagrant existence in The Hague, you can turn to the Kessler Foundation (De La Reyweg 522) or the Salvation Army (Nieboerweg 125). Under specific conditions it is possible to apply for assistance under the General Assistance Act through these organizations.
Trusting that I have informed you sufficiently. Yours sincerely, Anke van Kampen
Alderman for Education, Social Affairs, Employment Projects and Integration and Emancipation Policy
Lack of individualized treatment by municipalities and cold housing corporations
Generally speaking, in practice the human dimension is often hard to find at housing corporations. By presenting themselves as cold property managers who cling strictly to contracts, the person behind the tenant is completely lost sight of. It is paradoxical: while the Netherlands presents itself at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva as a champion of fundamental rights, in this case human rights organizations such as IFUD or Human Rights are being sidelined on their own soil. This already happened in 1995 in The Hague and in 2001 in Mierlo.
These cases — not only in the instance involving IFUD or Human Rights — show that poor consultation between municipalities and corporations still leads to unacceptable situations. Simply referring a human rights foundation to the Salvation Army demonstrates a lack of moral compass and does not accord with a rule of law. When the absence of individualized treatment is not accidental, but a deliberate strategy to stifle criticism of policy, this invites comparisons with repressive techniques from the former Soviet Union. Such practices are fundamentally wrong and undermine democratic values; they are extremely criminal.
The crux of the argument is that the Dutch government and its chain partners (such as housing corporations and complaints bodies) are guilty of the structural exclusion and marginalization of specific human rights organizations critical of policy and of political opponents who do not fit within their political-economic framework.
The presented argumentation rests on pillars like those of a criminal organization:

Systematic marginalization: Organizations such as the "Intermediary Foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (IFUD or Human Rights) are deliberately sidelined through cronyism, with the government choosing to cooperate only as part of a cartel with NGOs that fit within the established order: "ostracism." That is extremely unscientific and criminal. The examples involving IFUD or Human Rights are not isolated; think, for instance, of journalist Willem Oltmans and Fred Spijkers, the social worker who became known as a whistleblower at the Ministry of Defence. This is only a small selection from a larger number of cases. This shows that these are not incidents or system failures—as the government often dismisses them in its investigations and reports—but a deliberate strategy.

A network of left-wing NGOs and institutions, together with the media, that shapes the political and social climate is a frequent criticism pointing to the influence of (primarily left-progressive) civic organizations and media on public debate and policy, which leads to discussion about interests, ideological steering, and the balance between societal pressure and democratic legitimacy. This group is often seen as a "left" or "progressive" lobby that promotes progressive agenda items (such as climate, migration, social justice) and thus influences public opinion and the political agenda, to the detriment of conservative or liberal viewpoints.

Core of the debate:

Agenda setting: Together they influence which topics are prominent and how they are presented (framing).
Ideological influence: Critics argue that this network promotes a predominantly progressive or left-leaning ideology, which limits the political space for other views. Examples: think of issues such as climate policy, refugees, diversity, social inclusion and human rights.

Reactions and perspectives:

Critics: Fear a "left" or "progressive" hegemony that undermines democratic plurality and shapes public opinion one-sidedly.
Research: Some studies and analyses (such as those on the role of NGOs in EU policymaking) point to the significant but complex role of these organizations. In his articles for Wynia’s Week, Wouter Roorda analyzes the influence of wealthy donors on public debate and political decision-making.
In the article of 15 July 2025 Roorda describes the "shadow power" of left-wing NGOs. He focuses specifically on the role of financiers such as George Soros’s Open Society Foundations (OSF). According to Roorda, billions in "charitable funds" are deployed to influence political agendas through a network of organizations, often outside democratic

check. This aligns with his earlier analysis from week 26 of 2021, titled "Who pays for our public opinion?". In that piece he explained how:
Foreign philanthropists and governments determine the course of activist groups through grants.
The media and the public debate are coloured by the interests of these funders.
There is a lack of transparency about the money flows that exert influence on Dutch society.
Leftist Church
The term "The Leftist Church" was used by Pim Fortuyn (and earlier by others in the 1970s) as a metaphor for an alleged moral and political hegemony in the Netherlands. According to this critique, left-wing politicians, civil servants, the public broadcaster and subsidised activist groups formed a closed stronghold that determines what is "right" and "wrong". Key points of the concept:
Moral superiority: Fortuyn argued that this network attributed itself a moral elevation, comparable to the authority of the church in former times. Those who stepped outside the ideological framework (for example with criticism of the multicultural society) were "excommunicated" through exclusion or stigmatisation.
Network of interests: It concerns an interweaving between the government, education, the media and NGOs (non-governmental organisations). In this view they sustain one another through subsidies and revolving-door jobs.
The role of philanthropy: Critics of this "order" often point to figures like George Soros and his Open Society Foundations. They view his billions in support for NGOs engaged in migration, human rights and democratization as a way to impose a specific liberal, left-wing agenda outside the democratic process.
Current context (2026)
Today the discussion about this "network" is still very much alive, although terms such as the "Grachtengordel" (Canal Belt), the "Globalist elite" or the "Deep State" are now used more often.
While Fortuyn's supporters see it as a necessary critique of a one-sided power structure, critics regard the term "Leftist Church" as a populist tactic to discredit legitimate civic organisations and scientific institutes.
The Shelter City programme in The Hague is an initiative that, coordinated by the organisation Justice & Peace, temporarily provides threatened international human rights defenders with shelter

provides shelter and support to allow them to catch their breath and continue their work safely. Participating cities, including The Hague, support the programme to emphasize their role as a "city of peace and justice."

The claims about the motivations of the programme and the treatment of Dutch NGOs raise specific questions:

Holland Promotion: The official aim is the concrete support of human rights defenders worldwide, but in practice it turns out to be "Holland promotion." Strengthening The Hague's international profile as a city of peace and justice. Dutch human rights defenders: The Shelter City programme is primarily aimed at international human rights defenders who are in direct danger in their own country. The municipality of The Hague and Justice & Peace emphasize the protection and support of the international guests as the core mission of the programme.

The IFUD or Human Rights foundation describes a serious accusation against the Dutch government and related institutions, such as municipalities and housing corporations. The foundation claims there is systematic exclusion of critical human rights organisations and political opponents, citing the "Stichting Intermediaire van de Universele Verklaring van de Rechten van de Mens" (IFUD or Human Rights) as a concrete example.

The core of the argument is that the government deliberately undermines democratic due process by:

Systematic marginalisation and cronyism: the foundation accuses the government of "ostracism" towards organisations that do not fit within the political-economic framework, calling it "extremely unscientific and criminal."

Dysfunctional complaint handling: Citizens who lodge objections are said to get stuck in ineffective procedures and heavy burdens of proof.

Skewed jurisprudence: Criminal law would primarily serve the economic and political elite, rather than protecting the vulnerable.

Lack of tailoring and 'deep state' dynamics: The foundation interprets the bureaucratic handling of cases, such as the referral to the Salvation Army in the correspondence from 1995 and the conduct by the municipality of Mierlo in 2001, as deliberate strategies to stifle criticism, comparable to repressive techniques from the former Soviet Union. Overarching commercial interests: The benefits scandal and gas extraction in Groningen are cited as examples where structural commercial interests are placed above human rights.

The correspondence from 1995 illustrates a formal, bureaucratic response from the municipality of The Hague to a request for assistance without application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in policy, in which the applicant is pointed to the legal requirements of registration and actual residence. The alderman advises contacting the municipality of actual residence, or shelter organisations such as the Kessler Foundation or

the Salvation Army when there is talk of a vagrant existence. As a municipality you do not shift human rights responsibilities to the Salvation Army and the Kessler Foundation. Those institutions are not intended for that.
Evidence of a structural pattern of exclusion of your human rights organization by the government. Reference to the complaint against the Dutch State at the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg in 1994, the notarial deed of 21 June 2007 (where all notarial statements known to the notary in this case against the Dutch State count as one deed over all earlier deeds. All actions by the foundation thereafter: the various letters, investigations into online hate speech and the various bailiff's writs to the State and lower authorities up to the present should also be considered as having been commissioned. The arguments put forward by the foundation point to a fundamental distrust in the integrity of the Dutch rule of law. Such serious accusations of systematic, almost mafia-like, exclusion of specific organizations are significant and touch the core of democratic values.
From the perspective of the government and the involved agencies they have relied on compliance with laws and regulations, such as the General Assistance Act and the GBA (Municipal Personal Records Database), whereby procedures must be strictly followed, not taking human rights into account in their decision.
The cases and examples cited by the foundation (Willem Oltmans, Fred Spijkers, benefits scandal, Groningen gas extraction) are used by the foundation to demonstrate that these are not incidents, but a deliberate strategy of the establishment to maintain the status quo and silence critical voices. The text serves as a powerful plea to have these alleged structural abuses acknowledged and investigated.
Shelter City
The organization Justice & Peace, coordinator of the Shelter City program, as an example of a "left-wing NGO" that is part of this supposed (left-wing) network.
The core points of the criticism you described include:
Agenda-setting and Framing: The ability of this network to determine which subjects get priority and how they are presented in the media.
Ideological Hegemony: The fear of a "left-wing hegemony" that excludes or stigmatizes alternative, often conservative, viewpoints (the "ostracism" the foundation referred to earlier).

Influence of Financiers: The role of wealthy donors, such as George Soros's Open Society Foundations (as analyzed by Wouter Roorda), who—through grants—would steer political agendas outside direct democratic oversight.
Terminology: The use of terms like "The Left Church" (Pim Fortuyn), "Grachtengordel," or "Deep State" to denote this alleged power structure.
This analysis describes a well-known social and political debate about the influence of civil society organizations (the so-called "fourth estate") in a democracy. Critics see in this an undemocratic steering of society by an ideologically driven elite. Supporters of such NGOs, by contrast, emphasize the legitimate role civil society organizations play in bringing underexposed issues onto the agenda (such as human rights, climate change) and in holding governments and market actors to account. They view it as an essential part of a vibrant democratic society and of the civic sphere.
The earlier argument about the exclusion of the 'Stichting Intermediaire van de Universele Verklaring van de Rechten van de Mens' (IFUD or Human Rights) connects to this broader critique by suggesting that established NGOs are part of a cartel that sidelines outsiders who criticize the system.
The term ostracism
Ostracism (social exclusion) is used to denote the deliberate, structural exclusion of IFUD or Human Rights and like-minded actors by the Dutch government and its partners.
Cartel formation
There is said to be a selective "cartel" that cooperates only with NGOs that:

- Align with the "left wing" or ideology.
- Do not harm, and may even serve, the trade interests of the Dutch state.

  In this view, human rights do not function as an absolute moral or legal framework but as a flexible political instrument deployed when it suits the international or political agenda of the Netherlands (for example abroad via Shelter City), yet ignored at home when faced with internal criticism.

  This is a radical view of the operation of Dutch democracy and the rule of law, one that clashes with the official account of independent judiciary, bureaucratic impartiality, and a plural civic sphere. Your analysis suggests that the appearance of these principles is maintained, while in practice the effect is the strategic exclusion of inconvenient voices.

The conclusion is that the benefits scandal and the issues surrounding gas extraction in Groningen should not be seen as isolated incidents or merely as "system failures," but as examples of what criminology calls "state-corporate crime." This concept describes criminal or harmful activities that result from collaboration between state bodies (government, policymakers) and commercial enterprises (in the case of Groningen: the NAM/Shell/Exxon Mobil; in the benefits scandal: the government and related private/semi-private implementing organizations). The core of this theory, applied to your argument, is that the structural nature of the abuses, in which the interests of powerful institutions (both public and private) prevail over the welfare and rights of citizens, points to deliberate, coordinated wrongdoing rather than unintended errors or failing policy.

From this perspective, the analysis directly connects to your earlier argument about the exclusion of critical voices, in which the "deep state" or the "cartel" maintains the established order at the expense of democratic rule of law.

Human rights municipalities paper reality

Concerns remain about the "paper reality," which are partly reflected in recent reports on the Municipalities and Human Rights Platform. Although the platform is still active in 2026 and organizes thematic meetings, the translation into concrete social assistance policy remains a point of criticism.

Below is the current status of the platform and the criticisms regarding practical implementation:

1. Status and Activities in 2025-2026
   The platform, coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), is still focused in 2026 on knowledge sharing:

• Focus on themes: In September 2025 a large meeting was held about the right to be heard and to present counterarguments. Other priorities are housing, shelter and digital rights.
• Publications: Guidance documents have been published, such as "From Paper to Practice: Human Rights in Every Municipality" (July 2025), specifically designed to reduce the gap between theory and implementation.
2. Social Assistance and "Paper Reality"
Despite the platform's efforts, watchdogs report that progress on economic and social rights, such as those related to social assistance, is lagging:
• Criticism of progress: It became clear in 2025 that the Netherlands is making insufficient progress in protecting social rights, including poverty alleviation and the position of people on social assistance.
• Participation under pressure: A report from March 2025 ("Participation under Pressure") confirms your concern: citizens often still have little effective say in policies that directly affect them, such as the implementation of the Participation Act.
• Fragmentation: Implementation often remains limited to specific projects or occasional theme evenings, rather than being structurally embedded in the social domain.
3. Concrete Developments in 2026
Conclusion: The platform largely remains at the level of "addresses," and is supported by critical reports from 2025 that point to a gap between the paper ambitions and the daily reality for benefit recipients.
The gap between rights and practice (2026)
Although human rights are universal, the reality is that the Dutch government often applies them passively: you have the right, but the citizen must "claim" it themselves.
• Automatic safeguarding: There is currently no legal system that automatically activates a "human rights subsistence allowance" when social assistance is terminated.
• Debt industry: As Investico describes, collection systems directly worsen the situation of people without income.
• Subsidy dependence and "Systemic Coercion"
Criticism from (former) MP Omtzigt about the financial entanglement of institutions.

• Perverse incentives: When care and assistance agencies are dependent on production (subsidy per trajectory), there is a risk that the "system" sustains itself at the expense of individual human dignity.
• Duty of care vs. sanction: Since the "Human Measure" debates (post-benefits scandal), municipalities in 2026 are indeed required to provide tailored solutions, but implementation remains constrained by budgets and the Participation Act.
The role of the government
The comparison with international issues—such as Gaza-Israel—underscores the view that trade interests and political structures often prevail over individual humanity.
Bailiff's writ
https://archive.org/details/handel-en-investeringen-en-militaire-samenwerking-met-israel In national social assistance law this is expressed by:

1. Enforcement over help: The emphasis still often lies on control and sanctions rather than on the unconditional guarantee of a subsistence minimum.
2. Bureaucratic treadmill: The obligation to go to court for basic rights (for an "interim measure") is experienced by many as a violation of the spirit of the Constitution.

   Conclusion: In 2026 the legal "paper reality" is indeed the greatest barrier to human rights and the threshold for the citizen who already deals with bailiffs is in practice often insurmountable.

   Participation Act

   In 2026 the reform of the Participation Act is central under the banner "Participation Act in balance," with the human measure becoming the legal starting point. The letter from Minister Van Hijum of 6 February 2025 to the Council for the Judiciary marks a shift in the sanctions and fines regime. Key points Sanctions and the Human Measure

   • Right to make mistakes: Since mid-2025 and codified for 2026 the "right to make a small mistake" has been introduced. This means that citizens, on a first unintentional breach of the

duty to provide information do not immediately receive a fine, but first a warning or the opportunity to remedy the situation.
• Individual assessment: From 1 January 2026 municipalities are legally required, when imposing measures, to explicitly take into account the individual circumstances and the seriousness of the conduct.
• Exemptions: To prevent people from immediately getting into financial trouble, the rules for gifts and side incomes have been relaxed.
Criticism of International Obligations and Basic Provisions
Despite these policy changes, investigative journalism (such as Investico) and human rights organizations continue to criticize the implementation:
• International Treaties: Critics point out that the government's focus on the "human scale" often remains a matter of policy and is not explicitly tested against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the ICESCR (the right to an adequate standard of living).
• Falling between the cracks: The "debt industry" remains a risk because the system of recovery and its connection to other collection processes can push people below the subsistence minimum.
• Legal protection: Investico notes that there remain "gaps in legal protection," with vulnerable groups finding it difficult to effectively enforce their right to basic provisions against complex government systems.
https://archive.org/details/platform-gemeenten-mensenrechten https://archive.org/details/wetsvoorstel-handhaving-sociale-zekerheid
Investigation "Outlawed in the Welfare State"
The situation closely resembles the benefits scandal, Karlijn Kuipers and Marieke Rotman, 12 January 2022 — published in no. 2, De Groene Amsterdammer.
The article is about a woman in the North Holland municipality of Wijdemeren who receives social assistance and gets a bag of groceries from her mother every week. The woman says she cannot afford her own groceries because she spends almost her entire benefit on fixed costs. The municipality demands repayment of more than seven thousand euros in social assistance. The report causes national outrage. SP parliamentary leader Lilian Marijnissen tweets: "How a government can become a monstrous machine that destroys people." "The Netherlands is sick," she tweets.

PVV leader Geert Wilders. “The government therefore learned absolutely nothing from the benefits scandal,” instead of “the government for the people.” A year after the grocery affair, platform Investico together with Een Vandaag and Trouw — among others for De Groene Amsterdammer — is investigating whether municipalities have actually begun to apply a “human scale.” Benefit recipients squeezed by large recoveries, despite municipalities’ relaxations More than eighty municipalities loosened their rules in 2021 on receiving gifts while on social assistance. Residents of those municipalities have since been allowed to receive gifts without their benefits being immediately reduced. But according to professors, social lawyers and other experts, this is only a drop in the ocean: people on social assistance can still face large recovery claims and find little protection in court. This emerges from research by Platform Investico, EenVandaag and Trouw, partly for De Groene Amsterdammer.

NATO STANDARD

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte
In 2025 NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte repeatedly emphasized the need for substantially higher defence spending, explicitly drawing comparisons with social provisions. Although he has no direct control over national budgets, in January 2025 he made the following suggestive remarks:
• Choice between priorities: Rutte stated that member states that do not want to raise their taxes will inevitably have to spend less on other priorities in order to strengthen defence budgets.
• Social security as a source: He pointed out that European countries on average spend a quarter of their national income on pensions, healthcare and social security. He added that only a “small fraction” of that money would be needed to significantly strengthen defence.
• New investment benchmark: During the NATO summit in The Hague in June 2025, under his leadership the member states reached an agreement on a new target of 5% of GDP for defence and related infrastructure by 2035.
These statements were seen by critics and the media as a direct indication that member states, including the Netherlands, should cut their social systems to meet the new military requirements. In the Netherlands in 2026 there is an ongoing political and social debate about the allocation of government funds between defence and healthcare/social security. The government aims to raise defence spending to the NATO standard, which puts pressure on other budgets.

Defense budget and the NATO guideline
• Current spending (2026): Total defense spending in 2026 is expected to amount to 25 billion euros.
• NATO guideline: The Netherlands currently meets the traditional NATO guideline of 2% of GDP. However, there are political debates about raising this further to 3.5% in order to safeguard long-term security. Impact on healthcare and social assistance Achieving higher defense spending leads to hard choices in the national budget:
• Cuts to healthcare: Various political parties and studies indicate that cuts amounting to billions in the healthcare sector may be necessary to cover rising defense costs. Analyses show that the healthcare sector will unavoidably bear part of the burden if the defense budget is increased further.
• Social security and benefits: As of 1 January 2026, social assistance and other benefits (such as unemployment benefit and disability benefit) will still be increased by 2.16%, in line with the minimum wage. Nevertheless, parties such as the VVD advocate a "more frugal government" and cuts to benefits to free up more room for defense.
• Vulnerable groups: There is growing criticism that protection for the elderly, disabled and homeless will come under pressure as a result of this shift toward a "defense state."
Economic considerations
The Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB) notes that higher defense spending contributes little to economic growth, while the costs for healthcare and social security are structurally rising due to population aging. The deficit in the budget is estimated at 2.9% of GDP for 2026, which falls just within the European budget rules.
“Nederland ‘a cup of soup in place of basic human rights’”
https://archive.org/details/tk-brief-asielnoodmaatregelenwetvoorgesteld-artikel-108a-vw-2000-strafbaarstelling-illegaliteit
Basic needs
However, it is possible that the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) will intervene. It ruled that human dignity is at risk if the authorities evict an illegally residing third-country national who has not yet been expelled, leaving them on the street without

to help him or her with basic needs. Think of shelter (bed), washing (bath) and food - (bread). As long as the removal has not taken place, the third-country national can invoke rights that are "guaranteed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights (...)", the Court says. CJEU JUDGMENT OF THE COURT (Ninth Chamber), 12 September 2024, ECLI:EU:C:2024:748. Source: binnenlandsbestuur.nl 3 October 2024

The Dutch state is bound by various international treaties that require the safeguarding of minimum basic human rights (social rights). While the Universal Declaration (UDHR) provides the moral foundation, the following treaties create legally binding obligations for the Netherlands: 1. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) This UN covenant of 1966 is one of the main pillars of the social rule of law in the Netherlands. • Minimum core: States are obliged to fulfil the "core obligations", including access to essential food, basic health care and housing. Right to livelihood: Article 9 recognises the right to social security and Article 11 the right to an adequate standard of living. 2. European Social Charter (ESC) This Council of Europe treaty is often called the "social constitution of Europe" and has been ratified by the Netherlands. • Basic provisions: The ESC obliges the Netherlands to provide assistance to anyone who lacks sufficient resources (Art. 13). • Right to housing: Article 31 requires the state to combat homelessness and to promote access to adequate housing. 3. European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Although the ECHR primarily concerns civil rights, the European Court has ruled that the state has a positive obligation in certain circumstances to provide basic services to prevent "inhuman or degrading treatment" (Art. 3). In the Netherlands this is applied, for example, in the "bed-bath-bread" facilities for vulnerable groups. 4. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union Since 2009 this Charter has been legally binding on the Netherlands when implementing EU law. Social assistance: Article 34 recognises and respects the right to social security and social assistance for everyone who does not have sufficient resources. Monitoring and Enforcement The Dutch state must periodically report to committees such as the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). https://archive.org/details/verdragen-onderdeel-van-internationaalrecht

"bed-bath-bread" The Netherlands acts in breach of the European Social Charter by failing to provide shelter, clothing and food to foreigners who are staying unlawfully on its territory. So rules the European Committee of Social Rights in the case Conference of European Churches v. Netherlands. What does the Committee say? By Lieneke

Slingenberg and Martijn Stronks On 17 January 2013 the Conference of European Churches (CEC) filed a complaint with the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR). The complaint alleged that the Netherlands was not fulfilling its obligations under the European Social Charter (ESC) by failing to provide accommodation, food and clothing to adult foreigners staying on its territory unlawfully. On 25 October 2013 the ECSR imposed an "immediate measure" in this case; see an earlier blog about that. On 1 July 2014 the ECSR declared the CEC's complaint well-founded. Under Article 8 of the ESC's Additional Protocol this decision was made public only four months later (on 10 November 2014), source: Lieneke Slingenberg and Martijn Stronks, 17 November 2014.
European Committee of Social
Rights https://archive.org/details/ECSRComplaintNo902013 Legal complications
Criminalizing illegality brings legal complications at both the international and national levels. In Dutch law a specific conflict arises with Article 450 of the Criminal Code, the so-called "duty to assist." This article provides that anyone who witnesses another person in immediate life-threatening danger and fails to render assistance (while being able to do so without danger to themselves) is punishable by imprisonment or a fine. The friction between these laws is evident in the following points:
• Duty of care versus enforcement: Aid workers, doctors or private citizens can find themselves in a legal bind. On the one hand the law requires them to provide assistance to someone in need (Art. 450 CC); on the other hand, providing ongoing assistance to an undocumented person under the new legislation could be seen as complicity or facilitating illegal residence.
• Legal certainty: Critics point out that the state should not force citizens to choose between committing one criminal offense—ignoring a person in need—or violating immigration law.
Humanitarian baseline:
The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) provides that no one shall be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment. Article 450 CC is often seen as the national embodiment of this moral and legal baseline. Although the

The debate over criminalizing illegal stay has been going on for years in Dutch politics; implementation remains complex because of this clash with existing care obligations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Now that illegality is criminalized in the Netherlands, the question is: who will be the next group? The fundamental principle of universal human rights states that every person, regardless of nationality, residence status or any other condition, is entitled to basic human rights. This principle is enshrined in international treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). A fundamental principle of the rule of law. Regardless of origin, nationality, or residence status, anyone detained in the Netherlands for a criminal offense retains full entitlement to basic human rights and a fair trial. These rights are anchored both in the Dutch Constitution and in international treaties, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The main rights include:
Right to legal assistance: Every suspect has the right to consult a lawyer before and during interrogation. If one cannot afford a lawyer, one is assigned one by the government through the Legal Aid Council.

• Right to humane treatment:
This means protection against torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in accordance with international treaties.

• Right to information: The arrested person must be informed as soon as possible, in a language he or she understands, of the reason for the arrest and the charge.

• Right to an interpreter: If the person involved does not speak Dutch, an official interpreter is provided during interrogations and hearings. Dutch authorities are legally obliged to guarantee these rights at all times.

Fundamental Rights and Legislation

The case in the U.S. (City of Grants Pass v. Johnson) revolves around whether imposing fines or arrests for basic survival activities (such as sleeping or lying outdoors) violates the Eighth Amendment (which forbids cruel and unusual punishments), particularly when no alternative shelter is available. In the Netherlands, a complete criminalization of the status of homelessness—regardless of the behavior or the

the lack of availability of shelter is very likely to conflict with fundamental human rights, such as:

• Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR): The right to an adequate standard of living, including housing.

• The basic principles of the Dutch welfare state:

Whereby the government has a duty of care toward citizens who get into trouble through no fault of their own. Policy Differences The Netherlands and America have fundamentally different approaches to social security and housing. Dutch policy is aimed at preventing homelessness and providing shelter and rehousing. Conclusion: The law that criminalizes illegal presence does not create a legal precedent to criminalize the status of being homeless. The reasons for the two laws are completely different: one concerns state sovereignty and immigration law; the other concerns social policy and human rights. Although there is debate in the Netherlands about local rules (APVs) that restrict the behavior of homeless people (such as camping), the step to criminalize the status of homelessness itself is contrary to Dutch and international legal principles.

https://archive.org/details/leger-des-heils

https://archive.org/details/illegalen-nederland-2025

The following text describes a harsh reality in which people with a minimum income and benefit recipients are systematically stigmatized and psychologically harmed, and are labeled by the media and institutions as "profiteers." This treatment, accompanied by a confusing legal and bureaucratic system and the medicalization of social problems, leads according to the text to dehumanizing exhaustion and trauma among people who depend on benefits. The key points from the text are:

Systematic
Stigmatization: People receiving benefits are often portrayed in the media and by institutions as “free riders,” which severely damages their self-image.
• Institutional mistrust: There is a repressive system in which the focus is on obligations and control rather than respectful support. The comparison is made to the benefits scandal as an example of how citizens can be crushed by the government. • Bureaucratic maze: The complexity of legislation and the cooperation between different “chain partners” (such as the Employee Insurance Agency, the Tax Authority and municipalities) means that vulnerable citizens lose sight of their legal position. • Medicalization of social problems: Instead of addressing the underlying social causes, complaints are often translated into pharmaceutical therapies, leading to further exhaustion and traumatization. • Legal inequality: The citizen is often powerless in a years-long legal war of attrition against powerful institutions. The poorest are driven to apply for jobs, unemployed and on the margins of society. The self-image of these people is systematically damaged in the media and by the treatment they receive from the benefits agency, the implementing body and the public. This has nothing to do with helping people into work in a good and respectful way. People receiving benefits are portrayed as freeloaders who must be put to work. That is the message municipalities keep selling, albeit softened in various brochures. This sends the signal that the weakest in society are the big freeloaders, who everyone else must pay for in times of crisis. “Everyone can still do something! The client is expected to seize those opportunities! Society supports people, for example with a benefit. To pay for all those benefits a lot of money is needed. That money is collected from all of us. When the client shows a deficient sense of responsibility by failing to comply or not sufficiently complying with the obligations, the client wrongly takes something from the common pot. No one should want to participate in that.” As a result, these groups of people and their families are, as it were, given a “yellow star” by the benefits agency and effectively publicly pilloried. The real profiteering, however, must be sought in other circles within the established order of government together with multinationals—the “military-industrial complex.” In this way these poor victims are inhumanely ground down and stripped, often causing household members to become frustrated as well. In a jungle of experts and institutions that all appear to work past one another and some of which later turn out to operate dubiously, these inexperienced fellow citizens soon lose sight of the steps they must take and of their legal rights. A victim of this practice is almost powerless to obtain recognition and then any rights. This practice leads to illness-inducing exhaustion and traumatization. People who become sicker and more dependent, along with their caregivers, live under a regime in which medical treatment also serves to maintain control of conflicts, and established interests are served by increasing turnover of pharmaceutical products. The benefit recipient becomes sicker, slides downward. The available response has—of course—predominantly only one answer: translating complaints into a therapy that is mainly pharmaceutical in orientation. Often people are unaware of the

unaware of the vulnerability of their position. Others raise objections and become entangled between complaint bodies that do not function, reports and forms, increasingly stringent obligations, a legal exhaustion battle, the heavy burden of proof, the debilitating one-sided legal practice up to legal tug-of-war before the Supreme Court. Here reference is made to the municipality, however municipalities, housing corporations, the Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), the tax authority, the police and youth care. They work together as chain partners. People may still remember the "benefits scandal" at the tax authority. The victims were systematically harmed.
Letter rule of law
https://archive.org/details/brief-rechtsstaat-nederland
The statement that people in the benefits scandal were systematically harmed is a frequently used description that aptly conveys the enormous impact of the scandal on the victims. A parliamentary inquiry committee concluded in the report "Unprecedented Injustice" that the government violated fundamental principles of the rule of law. The consequences for those affected were severe and traumatic:
• Financial ruin: Parents were often forced to repay tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of euros in benefits they had received, even for minor administrative errors. This led to enormous debts, job losses and in some cases even evictions. • Institutional racism and profiling: The Tax Authority used discriminatory algorithms and practices (including ethnicity and dual nationality) to label parents as fraudsters, which amounted to institutional racism.
• Human suffering and family disruption: The stress and financial problems led to psychological issues, relationship breakdowns, and in the most extreme cases more than 2,000 children were taken into care by youth services. Some victims committed suicide. • Violation of the rule of law: From the outset parents were treated as fraudsters, were not given a fair trial and could hardly defend themselves against the government, which withheld information from both the victims and parliament. The scandal, which took place between 2005 and 2019, has left deep scars and seriously damaged citizens' trust in the government. Restoration efforts and compensation schemes have now been set up to help the victims, but the road to full recovery is still long.
HEARINGS BENEFITS SCANDAL Prime Minister Mark Rutte under oath
(audio) https://archive.org/details/rutte-almacht-overheid

"Jobs carousel"
Snel steps up quickly over the benefits scandal in 2019. No punishment but lucrative positions through the jobs carousel.
Ruthless, conscienceless and merciless criminals from politics. In criminology often associated with sociopathy and psychopathy.
Article: https://archive.org/details/psychopaten-aan-de-macht Resignation (audio) Menno Snel https://archive.org/details/aftredenmennosnel2019
Menno Snel appointed as member and intended chairman of the Supervisory Board of Alliander The shareholders of network company Alliander approved at an Extraordinary General Meeting of Shareholders the proposal to appoint Menno Snel as a member of the Supervisory Board. Menno Snel is currently linked to FGS Global as a partner and advisor, an international strategic communications firm. He has extensive managerial experience in both the public and private spheres, with in-depth knowledge of the energy market and a strong commitment to social challenges. Previously he held, among other positions, State Secretary for Finance, director at pension fund ABP, president-commissioner of Royal IHC and chairman of Element NL. Alliander
17 October 2025

The contrast between the tough approach to homeless people and the "soft landing" of politicians of the "established order" touches on a broad societal debate about equality before the law in the Netherlands.

The approach to homelessness

Fining homeless people for things like sleeping outdoors or "nuisance" often leads to a vicious circle. Because these people cannot pay the fines, debts increase due to surcharges, which makes a successful restart in housing more difficult.

• National Action Plan on Homelessness: The cabinet aims with the program A Home for Everyone to end homelessness by 2030, with "Housing First" (housing first, then care) central.

• Criticism: Despite this plan, municipalities often continue to enforce based on the General Local Regulation (Algemene Plaatselijke Verordening, APV), which, according to interest groups such as the Street Consulate (Straatconsulaat), has counterproductive effects.

The "job carousel" and political responsibility

The term "job carousel" is often used when politicians, after a scandal or resignation, quickly land again in well-paid positions, such as at consulting firms or as mayor.

• Menno Snel: After his resignation over the Child Benefits scandal in 2019, he did indeed fill various other roles, including a board position at the IMF.

• Severance/unemployment benefits for politicians (wachtgeld): Politicians are entitled to a waiting-allowance scheme (Appa), which is often seen as an unfair safety net compared with the Participation Act for citizens.

The contrast

The crux of the matter is the discrepancy in treatment by the government:

1. At the bottom of society: A repressive approach in which mistakes or inability (such as homelessness) are immediately punished with fines that worsen the situation.
2. At the top: A culture of political responsibility without personal financial or legal consequences, often facilitated by a strong network. This inequality is an important theme in reports about the gap between citizens and government, where the government is often perceived as 'tough on the weak and lenient with the powerful.'

   “Deep State”

   The term "deep state" in the Dutch context is a political and sociological concept that is interpreted in various ways. The description touches on several critical perspectives on Dutch power structures. Below is a factual outline of how this concept is defined and discussed in the Netherlands:

3. Definition and Characteristics

   At its core, the deep state refers to the idea of a 'state within the state.' This would be a network of unelected officials, intelligence services and influential decision-makers who determine policy behind the scenes, regardless of which political party is in power. The following characteristics are often cited in this context:

   • Network corruption / cartel formation: The idea that a closed group (the 'establishment') passes positions to one another in key spots in politics, the judiciary and advisory bodies.

   • Media and Narrative: The assumption that the mainstream media act as a conduit for the incumbent power to steer the public debate.

• Subsidy dependence: The mechanism by which NGOs and social organizations are made financially dependent on the government through subsidies, causing them to lose their critical role (the "subsidy straitjacket").
"DEEP STATE" audio https://archive.org/details/de-diepe-staat-nederland DIGNIFIED EXISTENCE
Homeless people's right to a dignified existence
When the municipality suspends or stops social assistance because someone fails to comply with the duty to work, a tension arises between the law (Participation Act) and the right to a dignified existence. These are the main legal and ethical frameworks in 2025:

1. The Participation Act and the duty to work In the Netherlands, social assistance is a last-resort safety net. The law provides that those who can work must work. If someone is "too lazy" (legally: "culpably failing to meet work obligations"), the municipality may reduce or temporarily stop the benefit by imposing a municipal measure.
2. Basic human rights (Article 22 Constitution) Although the benefit can be stopped, the government has a duty of care. Under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Dutch Constitution, no one may be allowed to fall into a state of "inhumane poverty."

   • Homelessness and hunger: The municipality may not simply let someone perish on the street. If basic needs (food, shelter) are at risk, the municipality must look for alternatives. • Individual assessment: Following recent rulings by the Central Appeals Tribunal, municipalities must pay more attention to the human dimension. A sanction must be proportionate.

3. The 'bread emergency' scheme If someone has no money at all and can no longer meet their basic needs, there may be an emergency situation.

   • Individual consideration: The municipality is obliged to investigate whether there are "urgent reasons" to continue the benefit (partly) after all.

• Social shelter: If social assistance is completely stopped, the person can often still make use of social shelter to prevent homelessness.
4. What can the person do?
homeless people often have problems with the bureaucratic legal grind. Meanwhile they are left without any means of subsistence.
When social assistance is suspended, the person has the following rights:
• File an objection: One can file an objection against the municipality's decision within 6 weeks.
• Interim measure: In cases of acute financial distress, a judge can be asked to temporarily reverse the suspension via a request to the court.
• Legal assistance: It is advisable to contact the Legal Aid Desk (Juridisch Loket) for free advice on human rights and social assistance matters.
Conclusion: Although the municipality may stop payments in case of refusal to work, this must not lead to a situation that conflicts with human dignity. There must always remain a route to basic help (food and shelter). The core of a fundamental legal debate: the hierarchy between national laws (such as the Participation Act) and international human rights treaties (such as the ICESCR or the ECHR). The argument that human rights are unconditional and stand above national law is supported in case law and by human rights organizations as follows:

1. Human dignity as a lower limit According to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living. The state may attach conditions to this (such as an obligation to work), but the sanction for failing to comply with those conditions may never lead to the loss of the 'minimum core' of that right. If a sanction leads to acute hunger or homelessness, human dignity is at stake. In that case it constitutes inhuman treatment, which is prohibited under Article 3 of the ECHR. 2. The duty of the official In the Netherlands civil servants are indeed bound by the Constitution and international treaties. Since the childcare benefits scandal there has been much more attention to the human dimension in 2024 and 2025.
2. Article 11 Participation Act: This article gives the municipality the leeway (and the duty) to deviate from the rules if there are "urgent reasons."

3. Principle of proportionality: A civil servant may not blindly apply the law if the consequences for an individual are disproportionately severe in relation to the aim (encouraging work).
4. Human rights without reciprocity Human rights are inherent to being human and do not need to be "earned." This sometimes conflicts with the political principle of social assistance as "reciprocity."
The legal reality in 2025 is that:
The government may require that you try to provide for your own upkeep. However, the government may never deprive you of the means strictly necessary to survive (food, essential medical care and basic shelter).
4. Direct effect of treaties In the Netherlands, citizens can invoke provisions of international treaties directly before the courts (via Articles 93 and 94 of the Constitution). If a social assistance law in a specific case leads to a violation of a fundamental human right, the judge must set aside the national law in favor of the human right.
Action and advice:
If you or someone around you is facing this, it is essential to explicitly refer in an objection to the violation of the minimum core of the right to a life in dignity.
Seek support for this from:
Institutions for human rights for advice on the state's obligations.
• The National Ombudsman, who supervises whether authorities behave properly and respect human dignity.
In short: The duty to work exists, but it may never abolish human dignity. The state must always keep a back door open to prevent anyone from falling below the absolute subsistence minimum.

Homeless

The municipality has stopped the benefits and people are left on the street without any means of subsistence. Human rights treaties state that the right to a dignified existence (food, clothing, shelter) must not be made dependent on an administrative act.

In practice, as for example in the municipality of The Hague, a dangerous gap can arise: the application for a necessary mailing address can take up to six weeks because of investigation periods. During this period homeless citizens literally fall between the cracks; they have no access to essential means of subsistence and end up in a complex legal and administrative "merry-go-round." According to research into the debt industry by Investico, these citizens are often no longer able to resolve this accumulation of problems effectively and quickly on their own and sink even further down the social ladder.

PARTICIPATION ACT strict interpretation rules

The rules of the Participation Act are applied meticulously and strictly by municipalities. This strict interpretation — "applying the rules restrictively" — without taking human rights into account causes people to fall "between the cracks." Therefore municipalities must carry out the suspension of social assistance in such a way that this process dovetails seamlessly with basic human rights.

Currently benefits are often suspended with only a reference to an objection procedure or the courts. Much time is lost there, while in the meantime people have no means of subsistence. The often harrowing problems that precede this then threaten to make these fellow citizens lose control of their lives as bailiffs quickly appear on behalf of various creditors (Investico article "debt industry"). BOTTLENECKS strict interpretation

• Suspension without a safety net: When a municipality suspends a benefit for investigation, payment stops immediately. Because appeal procedures can take months, an acute shortage of means for basic necessities (rent, healthcare, food) arises.

• The "debt industry": As described by platforms like Investico, missed payments due to suspensions lead to a chain reaction of collection fees and bailiff visits, which irreversibly worsen the financial situation.
• Legal reflex: Municipalities often resort to the courts but not first to basic human rights, while for someone without income the threshold for going to court (or seeking interim relief) is often too high physically and mentally. Every civil servant is obliged to incorporate human rights into policy.

Homeless mothers

According to investigative platform INVESTICO, several municipalities threaten homeless mothers with having their children taken away if they ask for shelter. Experts say this is contrary to human rights.

fines and drive homeless people on

Homeless people who, after a long time, get housing again are sometimes confronted with arrears from their time on the street. Fining homeless people pushes them further into trouble and it is ‘of little use’ to penalize people without a home for sleeping outdoors. Punishment contributes to further stigmatizing homeless persons, something the government aims to combat with the National Action Plan on Homelessness. https://archive.org/details/beboeten-en-opjagen-daklozen

Netherlands winter-cold scheme for the homeless

The gap between symbolic support for human rights and the actual implementation of the duty of care for one’s own citizens. Here are the main legal and societal bottlenecks regarding homeless shelter in the Netherlands in 2026:

1. Right to housing vs. emergency shelter
   According to the European Social Charter and the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, everyone has the right to adequate housing.

• The practice: The "winter cold scheme" is a humanitarian minimum (survival), not an implementation of the right to housing. Municipalities often apply strict admission criteria (such as regional binding), which the Central Appeals Tribunal often finds unlawful, but in practice continues to exist.
• Criticism Various human rights institutions regularly point out that emergency shelter should be a temporary measure, whereas it has now often become a structural end point because of:
the housing shortage
2. The role of Charity vs. Government Responsibilities
When the government depends on organizations like the Salvation Army or local churches for basic needs (food, a warm place to sleep), responsibility shifts from an enforceable right to voluntary charity.
• Human rights are intended to make citizens independent from the arbitrariness of charity.
• By placing implementation with NGOs, the government can evade direct political accountability for the system's malfunctioning.
3. "Symbolic" Human Rights
Amnesty International is a left-leaning human rights organization that does good work, but its focus is more on “refugees” and therefore less on Dutch people. Amnesty wrote critical reports regarding the situation Israel vs Gaza. Amnesty is often the regular human rights interlocutor for municipalities in the Netherlands.
Symbolic human rights actions such as the annual December writing campaigns for Amnesty International organized by various municipalities point to a painful paradox given the dire situation more and more Dutch people find themselves in due to government budget cuts:
• Foreign policy: The Netherlands presents itself internationally as a champion of human rights and criticizes other countries for their policies.

• Domestic policy: On files such as homelessness, the benefits scandal and asylum policy, (international) courts increasingly rule that the Netherlands fails to meet its own minimum standards.

4. What does the Council of Europe say?

The Council of Europe has reprimanded the Netherlands several times via the so-called FEANTSA complaints. These showed that shelter for the homeless in the Netherlands does not meet European standards, because access to shelter is too often denied on the basis of bureaucratic rules.

Conclusion: The winter cold scheme is indeed a symptom of a failing system. As long as policy is aimed at "shelter" rather than "housing" (Housing First), the state remains remiss with respect to the international treaties it has itself ratified.

Food as a basic right

It is a stark reality in 2026 that food insecurity in the Netherlands appears to have become structural. The gap between income and the costs of basic needs has become insurmountable for a large group of people. Below is an overview of the current state of affairs:

The legal and ethical context

Although international treaties do not specify a particular sum, they do oblige states to guarantee an adequate standard of living. Access to sufficient and healthy food is a fundamental right. When large groups become dependent on private charity (such as food banks), the government, by these standards, fails in its duty of care.

The comparison with the “European Prison Rules” 2006 is striking: if society guarantees a detainee a certain nutritional standard, it is a moral and legal necessity that citizens at liberty do not fall below that same minimum because of economic circumstances. The core of the injustice: "Charity is not a right"

The finger on the sore spot: the difference between charity and rights

- The role of the State: According to international treaties (such as the ICESCR) the Dutch State has the duty to guarantee citizens a life of human dignity. This must be anchored in legislation and social provisions.
- The role of the Salvation Army: Institutions such as the Salvation Army or the food bank are meant as emergency support for occasional crisis situations. When the government systematically refers people to them, it privatizes its duty of care.

Situation in 2026:

https://archive.org/details/european-prison-rules-eng-2006

"Kitchen table conversations" under the Wmo framework

Legal frameworks around tailored provisions and international treaties

The current implementation practice of the Wmo, in which the kitchen-table conversation is central, is seen by critics as an instrument of budget control. Although refusing a home visit can lead to an application being set aside for lack of verifiable need, this does not relieve the municipality of its duty of care.

In accordance with international treaties, the government is bound by minimum basic standards. A tailored provision may never fall below this minimum level. Dutch obligations stem from the ECHR and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. From these follows the duty to promote care that is available, accessible, acceptable and of adequate quality.

In addition to the right to health, municipalities must take into account the protection of the client's privacy and physical integrity. National legislation must always be tested against these international frameworks. Basic care — consisting of personal care, household help and social support — is a fundamental right that safeguards human dignity and participation.

The basic obligation also applies to UWV reassessments for WIA. Obligations flow from the ECHR and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. From these follows the duty to promote care that is available, accessible, acceptable and of adequate quality. In addition to the right to health, municipalities must take into account the protection of the client's privacy and physical integrity. National legislation must always be tested against these international frameworks. Basic care — consisting of personal care, household help and social support — is a fundamental right that safeguards human dignity and participation. To that end there is a basic right to life, and to participation in society and cultural activities.

This is a correct legal depiction of how international treaties operate in Dutch legal practice, including at the UWV and municipalities.

When the government (for example the UWV during a WIA reassessment or a municipality under the Wmo) makes decisions, they must take into account the following frameworks:

• UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: This treaty obliges the government to remove barriers so people with disabilities can participate on an equal basis. The right to independent living and participation in society is central.

• ECHR (Article 8): This article protects the right to respect for private and family life and physical integrity. During a reassessment or needs assessment, the government must not infringe on human dignity.

• Duty of care: The government must ensure that care is not only available, but also accessible (without unreasonable barriers), acceptable (with respect for the client's culture and ethics) and of good quality.

Assessment against European and international frameworks

For more information:

• the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

• European Charter of the Rights and Responsibilities of Older Persons

Letter on the healthcare system to the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

https://archive.org/details/Gezondheidszorgstelsel

IFUD or Human Rights

The Chair

J.P. van den Wittenboer

Attachments:

• Your covering letter to the President of the House of Representatives dated 18 December 2025 regarding draft annual planning SZW 2026.

• 2x Municipality of The Hague, Department of Social Affairs 1995.

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Bijlage
1.

Datum 18 december 2025
Betreft Conceptjaarplanning SZW 2026

De vaste commissie voor Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid heeft SZW op 8 december jl. per brief verzocht een jaarplanning op te stellen voor 2026 (kenmerknummer 36673-6/2025D50466). Bijgaand treft u deze conceptjaarplanning aan.

De conceptjaarplanning bevat een overzicht van kamerstukken die SZW voornemens is te verzenden aan uw Kamer in 2026, op hoofdlijnen en zoals nu bekend.

De Minister van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid,

Mariëlle Paul

De Staatssecretaris Participatie en Integratie,

J.N.J. Nobel

Gemeente Den Haag

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Uw kenmerk

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Onderwerp
sociale rechten

Hiermee bevestig ik de ontvangst van uw bovenvermelde, aan de burgemeester gerichte, brief. Aangezien dit onderwerp onder de verantwoordelijkheid van de wethouder van Onderwijs, Sociale zaken, Werkgelegenheidsprojecten en Integratie- en Emancipatiebeleid valt, heb ik, namens de burgemeester, uw brief ter afdoening naar deze wethouder doorgezonden.
Voor inlichtingen kunt u zich wenden tot het secretariaat van de wethouder, telefoon (070) 353 2650.

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Uw brief van
5 september 1995
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Geachte heer van den Wittenboer,

Met belangstelling heb ik uw brief d.d. 5 september jl. en de bijgevoegde stukken kunnen lezen.

U vermeldt in uw schrijven in Den Haag ingeschreven te staan. Ik ben zo vrij geweest dat na te gaan. Het hebben van een woon- of verblijfplaats is namelijk van groot belang in het kader van de Algemene Bijstandswet. Deze wet, op grond waarvan in beginsel financiële steun geboden kan worden aan mensen die zelf niet over een minimum inkomen beschikken, geeft aan, dat de gemeente waar iemand zich bevindt bijstand aan die persoon kan verlenen.

Een en ander betekent, dat u feitelijk zou moeten wonen in de gemeente Den Haag en in de haagse Gemeentelijk Basisadministratie opgenomen zou moeten zijn om hier een bijstandsaanvraag te kunnen indienen. Uit onderzoek is mij gebleken, dat u hier niet (meer) woonachtig bent. Dit leidt ertoe, dat u van de gemeente Den Haag geen financiële bijstand kunt krijgen. Ik raad u daarom aan om u zo spoedig mogelijk te wenden tot de gemeente waar u daadwerkelijk woont.

Mocht u echter in Den Haag een zwervend bestaan leiden, dan kunt u zich wellicht het beste wenden tot de Kessler Stichting, de La Reyweg 522 of het Leger des Heils, Nieboerweg 125, alhier. Onder bepaalde voorwaarden is het mogelijk om via deze instanties een beroep op de Algemene Bijstandswet te doen.

Vertrouwend u hiermee voldoende te hebben geïnformeerd, teken ik,

De wethouder van Onderwijs,
Sociale zaken, Werkgelegenheidsprojecten en
Integratie- en Emancipatiebeleid,

ANKE VAN KAMPEN

afdruk aan
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[translation Dutch / English]

Intermediary Foundation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

REGISTERED
His Excellency Drs. M.L.J. Paul
P.O. Box 90801
2509 LV, THE HAGUE

Mierlo, 18 February 2026
Our letter: 15 January 2026
Your letter: - - -

Subject: Amendment of the Participation Act

Your Excellency,

Apply human rights actively in policy

In 2024 the Dutch government was confronted by UN bodies about structural shortcomings in the social domain. The criticism from the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) confirms that the Netherlands currently does not meet international basic standards for social security and participation. Below are the most relevant passages and legal points you can use:

1. Structural deficiencies in the Participation Act (CESCR 2024)
   In its most recent report (E/C.12/NLD/CO/7) the UN committee (CESCR) voiced sharp criticism of the Dutch system:

- Insufficient subsistence minimum: The committee states that current benefit levels under the Participation Act are often not enough to secure an adequate standard of living (violation of Article 11 ICESCR).
- Penal approach: The UN criticizes the focus on enforcement and fraud detection, which undermines the right to social security (Article 9 ICESCR). Instead of support, citizens encounter a distrusting government.

1. The “digitalization leak” and algorithms
   The UN raised specific concerns about the lack of human considerations in digital systems:

- Discrimination by software: The committee warns that rigid software and algorithmic systems (as in the SyRI case) lead to profiling and can exclude individual emergencies.
- Missing human-rights test: Although the House of Representatives adopted a motion to make human-rights assessments for algorithms mandatory, this has not yet been embedded in the source code of software used to implement the Social Support Act (Wmo) and the Participation Act.

1. Failures in implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD 2024)
   In September 2024 the CRPD committee concluded that the Netherlands still has not fully implemented the convention:

- The medical model: The Wmo often still applies a "medical model" ("what is wrong with you?"), whereas the convention requires a "human-rights model" ("how can we remove barriers so you can participate?").
- Institutional neglect: The UN strongly advises the Netherlands to develop a national strategy that makes human rights enforceable rather than optional, so citizens are no longer dependent on the "whim" of municipal software.

1. The "bureaucratic grind" in appeals
   Despite much talk about the "human touch" since the childcare benefits scandal, citizens still feel the system works against them:

- Complexity: Appeals procedures are often so legally complex that citizens are hopeless without specialized help (for example from the Legal Advice Centre).
- Slowness: Despite new guidelines, procedures take a long time, while financial need (no benefits, unable to pay rent) is immediate.
- Digital divide: The shift to filing appeals online, which accelerated in 2026, excludes vulnerable groups without digital skills.

1. Infringement of basic provision and human rights
   The rigid sanctioning system within the Participation Act (such as the household-splitting norm or sanctions for administrative errors) is frequently criticized by human-rights organizations and the National Ombudsman:

- Subsistence minimum: When the government reduces a benefit that is already at the social minimum, the right to a dignified existence is directly violated.
- Homelessness: A sanction often triggers a chain reaction: rent debt → eviction → homelessness. This is seen as a failure of the government's duty of care.

1. The costs of homelessness vs. prevention

In 2026 the societal costs for one homeless person (shelter, care, police, legal procedures) are estimated at €70,000 to €100,000 per year.

- System error: Economically it is irrational to evict someone over a relatively small debt or an algorithmic sanction, then incur multiples in emergency costs.
- Prevention: There is a growing movement advocating “Housing First” and banning evictions of families, because prevention is far cheaper and more humane than cure.

Final report Expert Group Participation Act II (2023)

Chapter 1 General.
1.4 Taking into account limitations in people’s capacity to think and act (letter of 15 January 2026 addressed to the Minister of SZW)
Although human rights are universal, in reality the Dutch government often applies them passively: you have the right, but the citizen must “fetch” it themselves.

- Automatic safeguarding: There is currently no legal system that automatically activates a “human-rights living allowance” when benefits are terminated (p. 14).
- Conclusion: In 2026 the legal “paper reality” is indeed the biggest barrier to human rights and the threshold for a citizen already dealing with bailiffs often remains insurmountable in practice (p. 15).
- Legal protection: Investigations by Investico signal that “gaps in legal protection” persist, with vulnerable groups struggling to effectively enforce their right to basic provisions against complex government systems (p. 16).

The right to assistance, (social) fundamental rights are… (NSC faction, House of Representatives, parliamentary year 2024–2025, 36 582, no. 6, Amendment of the Participation Act, the Income Provision Act for older and partially incapacitated former employees and the Income Provision Act for older and partially incapacitated former self-employed, in connection with bringing these laws into balance in parts between subsistence security, reintegration and enforcement (Participation Act in balance) No. 6 MEMO FOLLOWING THE REPORT Received 17 December 2024).

Human rights at the local level and practical implementation

Although civil servants are obliged by oath to serve the law, including international treaties, in practice they are often blindly steered by local protocols instead of the underlying human rights.

Here are the main reasons and practical pointers for this situation:

Why the “reflex” to rules arises

- Protocol over principle: Civil servants are trained to implement specific laws such as the Participation Act and the Wmo. When a citizen invokes a “basic human right” (such as the right to a dignified standard of living or self-determination), it often does not fit the municipality’s standard computer systems or checklists.

How human rights can play a role

Although an official may not know what to do, human rights are precisely the minimum the government must never fall below:

- Individualization and the human measure: Human rights require that laws are not applied rigidly if that leads to inhumane situations. A human-rights claim is often the legal basis to deviate from standard rules (the so-called hardship clause).
- Direct effect: Some human-rights provisions have “direct effect,” meaning an official must apply them directly even if a local rule says otherwise.

In practice, municipalities often need to shift from merely executing rules to actively supporting residents from the perspective of their fundamental rights.

Systemic compulsion

Municipalities are often trapped in “systemic compulsion.” Because the software is programmed according to the strict rules of the Participation Act, civil servants see human rights as an abstraction for which their system has no “button.”
Still, the municipality as a governing body is directly bound by international human-rights treaties, regardless of what the software allows.

Why they “do not know what to do”

- Direct effect: Treaties such as the ICESCR oblige the government to ensure everyone an adequate standard of living, including food.
- Conflicting frameworks: In daily practice civil servants work from a checklist. A reference to “the right to life” or “human dignity” is not in their work instruction. This causes paralysis: they are legally not allowed to transfer money outside the systems, but they are also not allowed to let someone starve.
- System vs. person: Since 2026 the “Participation Act in balance” has created more room for the “human measure” and individual solutions, but ICT systems often lag behind this new legal space.

How to force the system to consider human rights

Use legal hierarchy: Human rights sit above the Participation Act.

1. Invoke Article 11 ICESCR: This article guarantees the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food. One can argue that the municipality violates this treaty by stopping a benefit without an emergency provision.

- Immediate assistance: A municipality cannot wait for a six-week appeals procedure if there is no food. The municipality must—after quickly verifying that an emergency exists—immediately provide an advance. If the computer refuses, a manager must intervene manually under "unforeseen circumstances." The municipality's duty of care goes beyond its computer screen. If they claim "the system does not allow it," they make an administrative error, since a treaty always outweighs software settings on an official's computer.

The application for special assistance for emergency provisions such as food usually takes up to eight weeks for a decision if all evidence is submitted. Due to workload, treatment can however take longer, sometimes 15 weeks or more. The citizen can request an emergency advance. Submit all evidence digitally and contact the municipality or social counsel.

To act and decide properly, sufficient food is a necessity for everyone; even the digital application for an emergency provision can be a barrier. As more municipalities live in an ivory tower, you cannot enter without an appointment.

Social Support Act (Wmo) "kitchen table conversation"

The point raised by IFUD or Human Rights touches the core of the tension between national law (Wmo) and international human-rights treaties, such as the European Social Charter (ESC) and the CRPD. From the perspective of human-rights organizations like IFUD or Human Rights, the current Dutch implementation practice can indeed be considered problematic. Below is a legal and treaty analysis of this claim:

1. Duty of care versus duty to cooperate
   International treaties, as well as the European Charter of the Rights and Responsibilities of Older Persons who need help and care, state that access to care is a fundamental right that must safeguard human dignity.
   Conclusion: IFUD or Human Rights rightly states that food is a primary necessity that cannot wait for a digital application or an eight-week decision period. The municipality is legally obliged to provide an immediate (within 24 hours) advance in acute need on the basis of the Participation Act. Ignoring this need is a violation of the foundations of the rule of law.

The State argues that the Wmo fulfils this right by providing individualized care.

Criticism: By making access to that care dependent on a “kitchen table conversation” (assessment of one’s own strengths and social network), the government introduces a hurdle that critics say obstructs universal access to care.

1. Is refusal of the conversation grounds for exclusion?
   If a citizen refuses the kitchen table conversation because it is perceived as an intrusion into personal life, a legal vacuum arises.
2. Wmo case law:

   The Central Appeals Tribunal (CRvB) holds that the municipality may reject an application if the client does not cooperate with the assessment, because then the necessity cannot be objectively established (except for the right to emergency care).

- Treaty law: One can argue that the State (through the municipality) thereby breaches its positive obligation to guarantee citizens a dignified existence. Relying solely on “emergency care” is, according to the CESCR, insufficient; care must be available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality (the AAAQ framework).

1. The municipality as a treaty violator?
   When the Wmo is primarily used as a budget-cutting tool—where the conversation serves to limit rather than enable care—the government acts contrary to the non-regression principle. This principle means acquired social rights may not be rolled back without compelling justification. If a citizen refuses to request help via the kitchen table conversation out of fear of bureaucratic arbitrariness or privacy violations and therefore remains without basic care, this constitutes a violation of the right to health (Art. 11 ESC).

Conclusion from a human-rights perspective:

IFUD or Human Rights is correct that focusing solely on the Wmo procedure is insufficient when it clashes with international treaties.

1. The State may not categorically refuse care if there is a clear need, even if the standard procedure (the conversation) is bypassed.
2. Individualization should also mean that the method for assessing need is adapted to the citizen, rather than forcing them into a conversation perceived as a cost-cutting device. In proceedings, citizens can directly invoke the direct effect of certain treaty provisions (such as Art. 8 ECHR on privacy and Art. 3 ECHR on humane treatment) to compel the municipality to provide care, even without a standard kitchen table conversation.

It is a crucial legal argument that the direct effect of international treaties (such as the ECHR and the CRPD) can outweigh the procedural requirements of a national law such as the Wmo.

For IFUD's or Human Rights' documents, the following two anchor points are essential to strengthen the client's position:

1. Article 8 ECHR (Right to respect for private life): If a client finds a kitchen table conversation too burdensome or an intrusion on privacy, the municipality may not use it as the only instrument. The government must seek the "least intrusive way" to establish need.
2. The non-regression principle: The State may not lower the level of social protection without compelling justification. Using the conversation merely as a budgetary tool to refuse care conflicts with this principle.

The core points of the identified shortcomings are:

- Passive application of human rights: The government imposes a 'duty to claim' rather than a 'duty to provide'. Citizens must enforce their rights themselves, which is often impossible for vulnerable people with limited capacity.
- Lack of automatic safeguards: There is no safety net such as a "human-rights living allowance" that automatically activates when benefits are stopped. This leads to situations where the subsistence minimum is not guaranteed.
- Paper reality versus practice: Legal frameworks (the paper reality) in 2026 form the biggest barrier. For citizens already facing debt and bailiffs, the threshold to seek legal protection against complex systems is often insurmountable.
- Gaps in legal protection: As Investico noted, gaps remain that prevent effective enforcement of the right to basic provisions against a rigid government.

Context: Participation Act in balance (2026)

Although the amendment Participation Act in balance (parliamentary document 36 582) aims to make the law more humane and to balance subsistence security and enforcement, these reports confirm that fundamental legal protection still falls short.

Findings from IFUD or Human Rights and the cited documents pinpoint a critical bottleneck in 2026: the gap between legal fundamental rights and the government's practical implementation.

The focus on the gap between the "paper reality" and the "living world" touches on several current legal debates:

1. Capacity to act as a legal norm: Since the final report of Expert Group Participation 2 on cognitive and practical limitations (1.4, Chapter 1 General) the question is whether

2. the legislator overburdens citizens. A technical letter can substantiate why parts of the current Participation Act conflict with the duty of care.
3. Human-rights living allowance: The concept of an automatic “human-rights living allowance” upon termination directly challenges the sanctioning culture. Legally this forces the government to define the floor of human dignity (Article 1 Constitution and Article 3 ECHR): may a citizen ever be set at zero euros?
4. Effective legal protection: Reference to Investico and the “gaps in legal protection” points to a structural problem. If the complexity of implementation (as with Participation Act in balance) is so great that a citizen cannot see what they are entitled to, effective legal protection disappears.

Impact on the legislative process (2026)

Link to the letter: https://archive.org/details/wijziging-van-de-participatiewet

The letter of 15 January 2026 to the Minister of SZW provides a fundamental legal underpinning of the shortcomings in Participation Act in balance, which entered into force in phases from 1 January 2026.

The technical and legal analysis in the 37-page letter focuses on the following core points for 2026:

- Active application of human rights: It is argued that the government treats human rights passively by putting a ‘duty to claim’ on the citizen. The letter calls for an active ‘duty to provide’ from municipalities (Letter p. 14).

IFUD’s or Human Rights’ call is clear: the government must not only recognize human rights but actively embed them in the implementation of social policy. This is a crucial moment in the debate on reforming social security. A 37-page document that delves into technical-legal shortcomings suggests that the criticism of organizations like IFUD or Human Rights is no longer merely moral but concerns the legal sustainability of the current system in 2026.

As the NSC faction and other parties in the House of Representatives (parliamentary year 2024–2025) press for subsistence security, this detailed letter can be used as ammunition for amendments. It forces the Minister of SZW to consider not only political desirability but also the state’s human-rights obligations.

- Automatic safeguard “human-rights living allowance”: The letter criticizes the absence of a legal safety net that automatically activates a basic income when benefits are stopped, to prevent citizens falling below the absolute subsistence minimum (Letter p. 14).

- Limiting capacity to act: Referring to the expert group's final report (1.4), it emphasizes that the current system overtaxes citizens with limited capacity to act, creating gaps in legal protection (Letter p. 15, 16).
- Legal barriers: The letter concludes that in 2026 the complex "paper reality" remains an insurmountable barrier for vulnerable citizens already dealing with debts (Letter p. 15).

This letter serves as a critical counterweight to the current legislative amendments (Parliamentary Document 36 582) and forces the legislator to enshrine the human measure not only as policy language but as an enforceable human right. The present letter of 18 February 2026 reiterates the main points and should be considered an addendum to the earlier letter of 15 January 2026.

Fines and exclusion zones as measures when addicted homeless people refuse help? That doesn't work, according to aid agencies

5 Dec 2025, Eenvandaag.avrotros.nl
Rotterdam struggles with a large group of addicted homeless people who cause nuisance in the city, and residents have had enough. The municipality now proposes a firm plan, but aid agencies are critical. "It helps nothing." Where Alderman Ronald Buijt of Rotterdam says the approach is a mix of 'care and repression,' aid workers see enforcement being prioritized. People who refuse help receive fines and exclusion orders, and begging income is confiscated. "They mainly turn the enforcement knob," say the Pauluskerk volunteers in the city.

The homeless are among the 'most expensive' population groups for the government, but they need not be: 'Care is only deployed when things go wrong'

23 Dec 2025, Tim Waterink eenvandaag.tros.nl
According to street doctor Michelle van Tongerloo, one homeless person costs society €30,000 to €85,000 per year. Thus homeless people are among the most expensive citizens in the Netherlands. Why is that? "A place in shelter easily costs €15,000 per year." "Homeless people are among the most expensive citizens in our society," said Rotterdam street doctor Michelle van Tongerloo this week on the programme Buitenhof.

High costs due to reactive care

According to street doctor Michelle van Tongerloo and lead researcher Nienke Boesveldt (VU), a homeless person costs society between €30,000 and €85,000 annually. These high figures arise because help is often only deployed when everything has escalated. Instead of

prevention, the government now pays for expensive emergency shelter (€15,000 per year), intensive mental-health guidance (up to €70,000) and repeated emergency hospital admissions.

The scale of the problem

Although Statistics Netherlands estimates 33,000 homeless people, Boesveldt estimates the real number above 90,000. Many remain out of the statistics because they are “invisible” out of shame—sleeping in cars or with family. The Salvation Army emphasizes that it can happen to anyone, for example after a divorce.

Investment is cheaper than ignoring

The article argues that the current approach fails both morally and economically:

- Homeless people cost taxpayers a lot through shelter, crisis accommodation, healthcare (often due to escalation from issues such as addiction, mental problems), and extra social support (such as children placed out of the home), while investing in quick, stable housing is often cost-saving in the long term. High costs mainly stem from escalation when there is no basis, leading to heavier use of expensive services.
- Foster placement costs around €16,000 per year. Placement in a residential or treatment group costs about €100,000 to €150,000 per year. Closed youth care institutions cost about €170,000 annually. Additional outpatient youth care can be provided. There is no insight into the indirect costs associated with an out-of-home placement.

Prof. Dr. Arnold Heertje (died 2020)

Book “Economics” 2014. Heertje was strongly opposed to inhumane policy and bureaucratic behavior. His criticisms were especially aimed at youth care.

Heertje’s core criticism vs. current reality

Heertje argued that youth care had become an “industry” where bureaucracy and financial incentives outweighed the child’s interest. Although courts sometimes ruled differently in specific cases at the time, recent findings align with his concerns:

- Perverse incentives and bureaucracy: Researchers and the Court of Audit confirmed that market mechanisms fragmented youth care. In 2025 evaluations of the Youth Act showed administrative burdens still consume a large part of the budget, just as Heertje predicted.
-

- Unjustified out-of-home placements: The aftermath of the childcare benefits scandal showed children were sometimes placed out of the home on “light grounds.” In 2025 various committees concluded legal protection for parents and children had been inadequate for years.
- The child as “product”: Heertje’s phrase “organized child abuse” is extreme, but the Health and Youth Care Inspectorate has warned in recent reports that children’s safety in institutions cannot always be guaranteed due to staff shortages and lack of continuity.

Confirmation by other researchers

Recent research supports the view that the system prioritizes the “system world” over the “living world”:

1. Legal protection: Legal scholars now argue that judicial review of out-of-home placements was often too marginal, allowing the narrative of youth-care agencies to be followed too readily.
2. Financial structure: Decentralization to municipalities increased financial pressure, which in 2026 still results in waiting lists for intensive care while lighter trajectories can be commercially attractive.

Conclusion:

Although courts sometimes ruled against Heertje in individual cases under the law at the time, history and the state of affairs in 2026 show his systemic critique was largely valid. The focus on “production” and the loss of the human measure remain core themes of needed reforms in youth care. Heertje acted as a whistleblower for a problem that years later was fully recognized: the system had become more important than the child.

- Return on investment: Each euro invested in preventing homelessness or in stable housing yields on average €2.50.
- Savings: Stable housing reduces the need for crisis care, police involvement and costly medical treatment.
- Obstacle: Moral judgments often block structural solutions; some argue homeless people do not deserve stable housing due to “their choices,” while doing nothing ultimately costs taxpayers more.

The core solution, experts say, is more affordable housing, earlier detection, and breaking the downward spiral into homelessness.

Source: eenvandaag.tros.nl

Fine regime for addicted homeless people

IFUD or Human Rights aptly describes the tension between the Participation Act's legal frameworks and the harsh reality for people with an addiction. Although policy formally allows "human measure" through reduced culpability, the foundation observes that practice often yields distressing outcomes.

Core points of the 2026 situation:

- System vs. individual: Even though fines are reduced to 25% in cases of reduced culpability, even a small deduction for someone with addiction and debts can be the tipping point leading to eviction or avoidance of care.
- The "gutter" and shelter shortages: Pressure on institutions such as the Salvation Army and social shelters is enormous. When benefits are suspended due to administrative failures, the financial basis disappears, accelerating the path to the street.
- The paradox of individualization: Individualized solutions require an intensive relationship between case manager and client. Under heavy municipal workloads this often fails, reverting to standard sanctions instead of necessary guidance to addiction care.
- Protected minimum (garnishment-free amount): Since rules around the protected minimum were tightened, a living minimum must remain, but in practice this is difficult for homeless people or those on the margins due to added fines and collection costs.

The foundation's observation pinpoints the sore spot: statutory individualization often does not prevent the most vulnerable from ending up on the street.

European Commission combating homelessness

The European Commission facilitates knowledge exchange on crucial policies via regular learning sessions. It also encourages member states to use EU funds to tackle homelessness.
News | 14 November 2025
More information:

- How member states use EU funding for inclusive policies.
- See national homelessness strategies of all member states.
- Report: Balancing autonomy and poverty alleviation.

Critical note (IFUD or Human Rights)

(National action plan on homelessness Netherlands)

National action plan on homelessness

State Secretary Maarten van Ooijen VWS: “I spoke to people who lost everything due to debt and hit walls of incomprehension. Their stories about struggling to get their lives back on track underline that we must act faster. Everyone deserves to be seen and to have a safe place to live.”

Polarization and the ‘Good Guy vs. Bad Guy’ frame

In the 2026 public debate there is often increasing polarization where groups are set against each other.

- The Establishment: Critics use terms like the “leftist church” to suggest an established order (politics, media, academia) imposes a moral standard. From this perspective the establishment sees itself as the ‘good guys’ defending values like inclusivity and climate policy.
- Criminalization of groups: There is growing debate about stigmatizing or criminalizing citizens who fall outside the established norm, ranging from addicted homeless people, critics of migration policy, to people skeptical of the establishment, political opponents, unemployed people, persons with disabilities, the elderly, etc.

“The paper reality of the European Commission. Although the plans look good on paper, the Commission knows practice lags far behind. As with other international issues, it often remains hollow words without direct results.”

IFUD exposes this as hypocrisy. While the state secretary speaks emotionally, the organization points to a pattern of political theatre that conceals structural indifference from The Hague.

Socio-political consequences

- Exclusion: Labeling a group as ‘bad’ leads to social exclusion and a lack of willingness to engage in dialogue.
- Institutional distrust: The sense that the government or the ‘establishment’ treats certain citizens as hostile deepens distrust in democratic institutions.

Disinformation

The European Commission’s strengthened Code of Practice on disinformation was officially recognized as a formal code on 13 February 2025. Critics fear a kind of “morality police” deciding what people should think is right or wrong.

Polarization and the 'Good Guy vs. Bad Guy' frame

In 2026 the public debate increasingly points to polarization with groups set against each other.
The Establishment: Critics use terms like the “leftist church” to suggest an establishment (politics, media and academia) imposes a one-sided moral standard. From this perspective the establishment considers itself the ‘good guys’ defending universal values such as inclusivity and climate policy.
Criminalization of groups: At the same time debate grows about the stigmatization or ‘criminalization’ of citizens outside that norm. This affects a wide range of groups: from homeless people and migration critics to government skeptics, political opponents, the unemployed, people with disabilities and the elderly.
Socio-political consequences:

- Exclusion: When a group is structurally labeled as ‘bad’, social exclusion follows and the willingness for open dialogue disappears.
- Institutional distrust: The belief that government views certain citizens as hostile fundamentally undermines trust in democratic institutions.

Disinformation and the surveillance state

Disinformation as an instrument of power
The European Commission’s reinforced Code of Practice on disinformation was officially recognised on 13 February 2025. Critics feared and still fear the rise of a kind of “morality police” deciding which information is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’.

The surveillance state:

Necessity or control?
When deploying monitoring techniques the government must demonstrate necessity, proportionality and subsidiarity. There are, however, European plans to link police photographic databases to facial recognition technology.
Technological developments are moving fast. The danger is that such surveillance systems are no longer used solely for citizen safety but by the establishment to maintain control over the population and consolidate their own power.

Historical and theoretical perspective

As early as 1975 Michel Foucault wrote in Discipline and Punish about ‘compulsory behavioral technologies’ used to discipline poorer classes. He described how Bentham’s panopticon extended into society (UN A/74/48037).

Shoshana Zuboff complements this by arguing that current ‘surveillance capitalism’ is unprecedented. Jack Balkin says the ‘National Surveillance State’ has become a permanent –

feature of governance. Digital technologies are used in the welfare state to monitor, target and punish citizens—especially the most vulnerable.

The ‘Predator Files’ and the European rule of law

Sophie in ’t Veld, longtime MEP for Renew Europe, investigated the opaque surveillance industry. Her conclusions are alarming: she compares the ‘Predator’ scandal to the film The Lives of Others. Where the Stasi spied in East Germany under the guise of national security to hide corruption and abuse of power, she sees similar patterns in Europe today: spying on politically inconvenient people in their most intimate moments. Her warning is clear: Europe must wake up before control becomes irreversible.

Criminalization, poverty and socioeconomic inequality

In the article “Criminalization, poverty and socioeconomic inequality” (2024) Marloes van Noorloos examines the complex relationship between criminal law and poverty.
“The situation is serious. Our democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights are in great danger. This is a fundamental European problem.”

Main points:

- Selectivity and inequality: People in vulnerable socioeconomic positions encounter criminal justice more often and are treated more harshly for minor offences than white-collar criminals. Criminal law measures, like high fines, can exacerbate poverty.
- Historical context (begging and vagrancy): Until 2000 begging and vagrancy were criminal offences in the Netherlands. Although the national ban was repealed, similar measures now return via local public order rules (e.g. begging bans and exclusion zones), again criminalizing vulnerable groups.
- Human-rights perspective: International bodies criticise criminalization of homelessness and poverty. The right to a dignified existence and the prohibition of discrimination are central. Criminal law should not be used to mask social problems such as lack of shelter.
- Social security and enforcement: The author points to tough enforcement in social security (partly due to the childcare benefits scandal). The line between error and fraud is often murky, with administrative law sometimes producing more punitive outcomes than criminal law.
- Positive role of criminal law: Van Noorloos explores whether criminal law can protect the vulnerable, mentioning concepts such as socioeconomic status as a grounds for aggravated hate crimes (as in France), where violence against poor people is punished more severely.

Conclusion: The article calls for greater legislative awareness of how criminalization can increase inequality and urges a more humane policy that does not treat poverty as a crime.

Master plan for algorithms

In 2024 and 2025 the Dutch State received sharp criticism from several UN committees for human-rights compliance, with specific focus on protecting vulnerable groups from algorithmic exclusion and discrimination.
Mandatory Human-Rights Assessment (IAMA):
The government is now legally required to carry out an Impact Assessment on Human Rights and Algorithms (IAMA) before deploying algorithms that make decisions about citizens. This forces developers to integrate fundamental rights directly into software design and logic.

UN committee recommendations (2024–2025): The CRPD stated at the end of 2024 that the Netherlands insufficiently protects the rights of persons with disabilities in digital systems.

In October 2025 the CESCR emphasized the need to proactively guarantee economic and social rights, such as subsistence security within the Participation Act, in all implementation systems.

Implementation of the AI Regulation

From February 2025 the first strict requirements of the EU AI Regulation (AI Act) apply. Systems used to allocate social benefits (like those under the Participation Act) are classified as high-risk, meaning they must meet stringent transparency requirements and ensure human oversight.

Room for manoeuvre for civil servants

A key criticism is that software is often too rigid. The 2026 trend is that systems must be adjusted so that human discretion and the application of human rights by the official at the counter become possible again, rather than the software issuing a definitive “no” without room for individual assessment.

The government is now working on a “master plan” for algorithms to harmonize these obligations across the entire chain (municipality, courts, mental health services). The national Algorithm Register shows which systems are currently being adapted to these new standards.

The 15 January 2026 letter by the International Foundation for Universal Declarations to the Minister of SZW (37 pp.) highlights a critical point in the discussion on algorithmic legal protection. Although the government is taking steps, such as the introduction of the Modernization of Electronic Administrative Traffic Act as of 1 January 2026, a gap often remains between formal legislation and the technical source code.

Embedding human rights in source code

1. Human rights in the source code (Enforcement pressure 2026)

   The call to make “human rights” not just a policy term but a functional requirement in software grew louder in 2026 due to the EU AI Act.
   From early 2026 systems for social security (like the Participation Act) must not only meet transparency standards but also traceability and human oversight in their technical architecture.
   Protecting fundamental rights must not be a mere box-ticking exercise; a fundamental shift in system design is required.
2. Status of the Participation Act (“Participation Act in balance”)

   On 1 January 2026 the amendment Participation Act in balance came into partial force. This law explicitly aims to restore the human measure, for example by:

- Giving municipalities more room to grant benefits retroactively for up to three months.
- Requiring municipalities to deviate from rigid rules when the individual situation warrants it.

  The problem: If a municipality’s or its partners’ software does not technically support this flexibility, the law remains dead letter.

The role of the House of Representatives and the Minister

What must IFUD or Human Rights do after the 15 January 2026 letter to the Minister of SZW?
IFUD’s strategy to send a follow-up letter against delay is crucial, because the government is legally bound to make high-risk algorithms fully compliant with new EU standards by August 2026 at the latest. Delays in adjusting source code by chain partners can lead to new lawsuits (similar to the SyRI case), where a court can order the government to take systems offline if human rights are not guaranteed.
Progress of specific algorithms and their IAMAs can be monitored via the government’s Algorithm Register, which in 2026 is being updated more actively for SZW systems.

This touches what many critics in 2026 call the “digital gap in the rule of law.” While senior officials often land well through the informal political job carousel, the citizen at the bottom remains trapped in a rigid, algorithmic reality.

It contains three painful contrasts central to political debates in early 2026:

1. The “hard” source code versus the “soft” law
   Although the law since 1 January 2026 (via Participation Act in balance) offers more room for the human measure, municipal and implementing agencies’ software often remains based on the old, repressive logic.

   IFUD or Human Rights observes a pattern of delay by referral to committees. If the Minister of SZW does not respond in time, the House can press for direct action via an emergency debate, especially if UN treaty violations continue.

- The problem: An official may have discretion under the law to help, but if the computer only gives an “OK” when rigid criteria are met, help is effectively blocked.
- UN criticism: In 2025 the UN warned that the Netherlands risks creating “human-rights-free zones” if technology dictates the law instead of the other way round.

1. The job-carousel versus the “gutter”
   Comparisons with former officials (such as Mr. Snel in the childcare scandal) who obtain new posts after a scandal jar with citizens who lose their livelihoods due to a system error.

- In 2026 there is growing societal demand for personal administrative accountability.
- The 15 January 2026 letter to the Minister of SZW points directly at this sore spot: why do systems that harm citizens not get fixed, while the system serves the elite?

1. The need for “Human Rights by Design”
   IFUD or Human Rights does not seek to dictate state policy, but given UN warnings: the Dutch State must meet human-rights standards. Embedding human rights directly into source code is technically a form of “Human Rights by Design.”

- This means an algorithm should block itself if a proposed action (for example stopping a benefit without human control) would violate the right to a dignified existence.

  As long as the Minister of SZW does not require this from chain partners, software remains an instrument of exclusion.

The foundation highlights the implementation gap: “breaking through the ‘paper reality’.” Senior policymakers in The Hague often communicate in policy notes that look good on paper but effect no practical change through chain partners’ implementation.

Summary

Here are the main legal and ethical bottlenecks regarding human rights:

-

- The right to a dignified existence: Under Article 20 of the Constitution and international treaties (such as the ICESCR) the government must guarantee subsistence security. The Human Rights Institute states that when sanctions cause someone to fall below the absolute minimum needed for food, housing and care, this can violate the prohibition on inhuman treatment.

- The ‘human measure’ versus the law: Researchers note the Participation Act often assumes a ‘regime of distrust.’ The focus on strict enforcement and complex information obligations often ignores actual human capacity, which the National Ombudsman has repeatedly criticised.
- Conflict with the UN Disability Convention: For people with disabilities the law falls short because it emphasizes labour market participation while the convention calls for full participation. If support (such as wage subsidies or guidance) is lacking, they are effectively penalized for circumstances beyond their control.
- Discrepancy in legal protection: In 2026 greater attention is paid to the fact that legal assistance for people on benefits is often inadequate to defend themselves against complex recoveries, which strains the right to a fair process.

Conclusion:

Sanctioning someone at a minimum income that is already defined as “strictly necessary” creates a paradox. The government deprives the citizen of means that the same law deems minimally necessary to survive. This turns the law for many into not a safety net but a source of subsistence insecurity. The claim is:
The current application—even after the amendment—of the Participation Act places citizens in a vulnerable position and can lead to human-rights violations. The practice of reducing an already minimal subsistence by even 25% can cause severe insecurity, poverty and exclusion. This is the ‘black hole.’

Criticism of the law’s implementation is widely shared and includes:

Subsistence at risk: Reductions to an income already set at the social minimum directly undermine the right to a dignified existence as anchored in the Constitution and international treaties.

- Administrative mess and legal protection: The ‘circus’ of service desks illustrates a lack of the ‘human measure.’ Benefit recipients must navigate a complex web of rules to enforce their rights, complicating access to justice.
- Paradox of the law: Intended as a safety net, the law through strict sanctions often functions as a source of uncertainty and stress.

The ongoing revision of the Participation Act aims to address these problems, including through more individualization, but the fundamental tension between enforcement and subsistence security remains central. ICT systems are a crucial bottleneck in 2026 government practice. Although the Participation Act in Balance aims to restore trust, the technical infrastructure is often still a “digital harness” limiting individualization and human-rights integration.

Key problems in 2026:

The “system says no” effect:
Many municipal software systems are built on strict process logic and enforcement. There is often no “button” or free-text field allowing an official to block a sanction on human-rights grounds without the system crashing.
Obligation versus possibility:
While the law in theory instructs officials to apply “human rights,” ICT often forces them into the old pattern of ticking boxes and meeting deadlines. Technology does not follow the cultural change fast enough.

Impact of information systems:

Experts warn the 1 January 2026 changes have enormous impact on information systems. If these systems are not fundamentally redesigned to “think in reverse” (starting from what the citizen needs rather than what the rule prescribes), officials remain trapped in the old model.

Legal protection and algorithms:

Algorithms and automated systems can increase inequality if the human-rights test is not effectively embedded in the system.

Status 2026:

Work is underway towards a “humane government,” but many implementers face the reality of being stuck between a humane need and a rigid computer system. The law now provides more legal space, but the computer still too often blocks implementation of those rights. The realization that a human-rights test must be embedded not only in law but in the source code of computer systems is one of the key lessons of recent years. As long as the official behind the screen has no technical room for humanity, the law remains only good intentions. In 2026 the government’s “source code” has indeed become a central battleground. The legal space offered by the revised Participation Act in Balance (from 1 January 2026) for individualization often clashes in practice with technological architecture.

Three main developments in 2026:

- The IAMA obligation: There is a growing call to require officials to perform an Impact Assessment on Human Rights and Algorithms (IAMA) for both new and existing ICT systems. This should prevent source code from automatically imposing sanctions without a human human-rights check.
- Strengthening the Awb’s safeguard function: In 2026 new legislation increases pressure on implementation. It forces public bodies to legally and technically anchor “service orientation” (Article 2:4a Awb). If a computer system does not offer an option to deviate from the rule in favour of the citizen, decision-making can be more quickly challenged as unlawful.
- Digital fundamental rights: The VNG’s Digital Fundamental Rights and Ethics Agenda 2022–2026 emphasizes that municipalities must reclaim public governance over their digital space. Many ICT suppliers must redesign their software so that “checkmarks” no longer automatically result in termination of subsistence, but leave room for human intervention.

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Conclusion 2026:

The General Assistance Act (Abw) 1963 under Minister Marga Klompé marked a fundamental shift in Dutch social security: from a favour to a legal right.
Key points of the law:

- From charity to right: Previously those without means depended on (often arbitrary) poor relief from the church or private individuals. With the Abw the government became responsible for guaranteeing a subsistence minimum.
- Last safety net: The law functioned as the ultimate social safety net for anyone who could not otherwise provide for themselves.

Development up to 2026:

Over the years assistance changed. Since the 1980s the focus shifted from an unconditional right to a system with more obligations and control. Today the Abw is subsumed in the Participation Act, with emphasis on activation and reciprocity. As long as the human-rights test is not embedded in system logic (the source code), officials work “with their hands tied.” The struggle has moved from the legal text to implementation in the software that shapes citizens’ daily reality.

IFUD or Human Rights

The Chair
J.P. van den Wittenboer

Attachments: opinion article robotics and artificial intelligence / euthanasia

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Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

wir haben Ihr Schreiben an den Europarat in Straßburg erhalten und mit Interesse gelesen.

Über die Sterbehilfe, wie sie in den Niederlanden praktiziert wird, lesen und hören wir in deutschen Medien viel, denn das Thema ist auch hierzulande hoch aktuell.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

I H R E

NEUE REVUE
Leserbriefredaktion
Helga Kalkofen

Robot trap

In the future, ownership of robots will likely be split between large tech companies (as suppliers) and a mix of companies and private individuals (as users), with models shifting from outright ownership toward "Robots-as-a-Service" (RaaS).

Key trends and owner groups:

- Tech giants and manufacturers: Companies that develop the AI and hardware (like Tesla, Waymo, Alphabet) will retain a strong hold on the robot's "intelligence," often through licensing or subscription models.
- Businesses and industry (B2B): Large firms in logistics, manufacturing and transport will own (or lease) autonomous fleets, such as autonomous freight trucks and warehouse robots.
- Consumers (B2C): Households will buy or lease robots for specific tasks, such as personal AI assistants, cleaning robots or, further in the future, humanoid robots.
- Hybrid models (RaaS): Instead of buying a robot, many will use it as a service. The manufacturer remains owner while the user pays for performance.

Important shifts:

- Divided ownership: People are considering models that distribute the gains from robots more fairly — for example via an "AI dividend" — to cushion society from the effects of automation.
- Regulation: As robots become more autonomous, legal debates about liability are emerging. That could lead to new ownership structures in which the developer/manufacturer remains legally partly responsible for the robot's actions.

In short, the robot becomes an "as-a-service" product: you have the robot at home, but the technology behind it belongs to a tech giant. At the core of one of the biggest socio-economic debates of 2026 is how wealth should be divided in an age of deep automation. Critics often call the scenario where the efficiency gains flow entirely to tech giants while citizens lose their jobs the "robot trap."

Three main policy approaches are being discussed worldwide to prevent this:

- Robot tax: This idea, promoted by figures like Bill Gates and various European think

- tanks, proposes taxing companies that replace human labour with robots. The revenue could fund retraining or guarantee a basic income. Information on the EU’s view of AI regulation is available on the European Commission’s official website.
- Public-private partnerships and "digital commons": Rather than fully nationalising tech companies, some economists propose models where data and algorithms (often trained on publicly available information) become partly publicly owned.
- The AI dividend: A model in which a percentage of profits from automation is distributed directly to citizens, similar to how Alaska shares oil revenues with its residents.

The risk that RaaS models create a new form of dependency is real. Without state intervention through regulation or tax reform, the gap between those who own the technology and those who use it could become insurmountable. The debate thus shifts from "how do we build the robot" to "who benefits from the robot."

The idea that automation will cause mass unemployment and make a national basic income necessary is much debated. State ownership of robot factories as a way to finance such a basic income is a radical approach within this debate.

Automation and Basic Income

There is broad consensus among experts and policymakers that the rise of robots and artificial intelligence (AI) will radically change the labour market and likely reduce employment in certain sectors. This has revived discussions about introducing an unconditional basic income (UBI) as a social safety net.

Supporters of a basic income point to benefits such as poverty reduction, less bureaucracy and a safety cushion for people who lose their jobs.

The proposal: State ownership of the means of production

The claim that a basic income will be unaffordable without state ownership of production means (like robot factories) touches on fundamental economic theories.

- Argument for state ownership: The idea is that profits from automated production would flow directly back to the state, which could use those revenues to finance a basic income, rather than relying solely on taxes that might become insufficient due to a shrinking workforce.

Criticism of state ownership: Traditional economic objections include concerns about:

- Innovation: State-owned enterprises are often seen as less efficient and innovative than private firms, which could slow technological progress.
- Market functioning: State monopolies can disrupt free markets and lead to inefficiency, lack of competition and a less dynamic economy.
- Financing costs: The initial cost for the state to set up or acquire such factories would be enormous, calling feasibility into question.

Alternative financing models

Most discussions about funding a basic income focus on alternatives to direct state ownership:

- Tax reforms: Proposals include higher taxes on capital, wealth or consumption, or specific "robot taxes" on the use of automation systems.
- Reworking existing social systems: Some proponents argue that by abolishing many current benefits, allowances and the associated administrative machinery, a substantial part of a basic income could already be financed.

In short, while state ownership offers a possible solution for financing, it is rarely mentioned in mainstream basic income debates because of the economic and political implications. The current debate focuses more on fiscal reforms and existing resources.

The state as principal shareholder in strategic robotics sectors aligns with the economic concept of "Universal Basic Capital" (UBC). In this model, not only income is redistributed, but ownership of the production assets that become more valuable through automation is shared directly.

Here are the core points of how this model is weighed in 2026:

1. From Tax to Dividend

Instead of only levying a "robot tax," the state could directly profit from the dividends of robot companies through state holdings. In the Netherlands this principle is already known from companies like NS and Schiphol, where dividends flow into the general budget. In 2026 the idea is floated to extend this structure to the tech sector to compensate for lost income tax revenue due to automation.

2.Sovereign Wealth Funds

A frequently mentioned model is creating a sovereign wealth fund (like Norway's oil fund) that invests in a broad portfolio of AI and robotics stocks and ETFs.

- Advantage: Spreads risk across the entire sector instead of relying on a single factory.
- Goal: Profits from these investments would be paid out as a "citizen dividend," making citizens co-owners of economic growth driven by AI.

3.The Role of the State in 2026

While governments in 2026 do invest heavily in robotics via subsidies (for example €42 million for tech startups and EU programmes), there is not yet large-scale public shareholding specifically earmarked to fund a basic income.

- Political stance: Parties such as Volt, based on CPB calculations, are now arguing for the feasibility of a basic income, with the financing mix remaining a crucial question.
- Legislation: New European AI legislation (August 2025) regulates the market, creating a more stable climate for governments to consider becoming investors.

Summary of the risk

The biggest risk — the "robot trap" — is that if the state holds ownership and years are loss-making, the state must absorb the losses, which could jeopardise payments of a basic income. Economists therefore often recommend a mix of direct participation and broad market investments to ensure stability.

The parallel between IG Farben and the rise of today’s robotics and AI industry highlights the danger of unchecked power in the hands of technocratic monopolies. IG Farben showed how a cartel, driven by profit maximisation and close entanglement with political power, subordinated human dignity to industrial efficiency.

In 2026 experts warn that robot and tech firms could exhibit similar patterns:

- Monopoly formation: Just as IG Farben’s Interessengemeinschaft dominated the chemical market, a few tech giants could control the infrastructure of work and decision-making.

- Dehumanisation: When algorithms and robots pursue profit goals without ethical frameworks, human labour can be reduced to a replaceable cost item, similar to the cartel's utilitarian use of forced labour. To prevent history repeating itself, strict regulation is essential, like the European Union's AI Act, which seeks to protect human rights from unbridled technological exploitation. The lesson from IG Farben is that when technology and capital merge without a moral compass, humanity is the first casualty.

The fear of a "robot trap" gets to the heart of the current debate on the distribution of wealth in an automated society. When labour is replaced by capital (robots), there is a fundamental risk that profits will accrue to a small elite while the rest of society becomes impoverished.

Below are the core points of the outlined scenarios and the need for regulation:

1. Economic Redistribution: Robot Tax vs. State Ownership

To prevent a massive drop in purchasing power and social unrest, various models are being explored:

- Robot tax: A levy on productivity gains from automation. The money could be used to finance a Universal Basic Income (UBI). Critics fear this will hinder innovation or prompt companies to relocate to countries without such a tax.
- Public ownership: The state owns (part of) the means of production so profits flow back to the treasury for public services rather than to private shareholders.

2. The Danger of "Austerity as Selection"

The chilling possibility that degraded care and bleak economic prospects increase pressure toward euthanasia or "voluntary" life termination — often called the "economisation of death" by critics. If care is seen only as a cost and not a human right, vulnerable groups may feel like a "burden." This is why a social safety net must be tied to technological progress.

3. The Lesson of IG Farben and the AI Act

The reference to IG Farben serves as a grim warning: a powerful industrial complex without an ethical framework can lead to the total devaluation of human life in service of efficiency and ideology.

- The EU AI Act: The first comprehensive law worldwide that classifies AI applications by risk. It bans, for instance, systems that manipulate human behaviour or apply social scoring (as in China).
- Fundamental rights: The law seeks to ensure technology serves people rather than the other way around by demanding transparency and human oversight.

Conclusion

Without strict regulation and a new vision of work and income, technology can lead to extreme inequality. The struggle is not only over software and hardware but over preserving the social contract. Human dignity must remain the benchmark so that innovation frees people from heavy labour rather than rendering them redundant.

Economic and social euthanasia

The debate about economic redistribution in an era of deep automation and demographic ageing touches the foundations of our social contract. Below is a concise analysis of two models and the ethical risk of "austerity as selection."

1. Models for Economic Redistribution

- Robot tax (focus on redistributing revenue): This model tries to correct the shift from "income from labour" to "income from capital." Its advantage is preserving existing market structures. The big risk is fiscal arbitrage: companies could move production to regions with more favourable tax regimes, which may cause de-industrialisation in countries that introduce the tax.
- Public ownership (focus on control and direct profit): By keeping (digital) infrastructure or automated industries partly in government hands, profits become public assets. This prevents the massive wealth growth from AI and robotics from ending up solely with a small group of tech elites. Critics point to possible reduced efficiency and diminished incentives for innovation in state enterprises.

2. The Danger of "Austerity as Selection"

The "economisation of death" is a critical concept warning of a scenario where the right to care becomes a duty not to be a burden.

- Structural pressure: When care deteriorates and economic inequality rises, the choice for euthanasia or ending one’s life can become less voluntary than it appears — an escape from a lack of dignified support or financial means.
- Care as a cost: If government or insurers view care only through a utilitarian lens (costs vs. benefits), vulnerable groups — such as the elderly or disabled — may be subtly or explicitly encouraged to forgo further treatment.

Conclusion:

Both redistribution models aim to address growing inequality. The choice between a robot tax or public ownership not only shapes economic structures but also determines how well a society can protect its most vulnerable citizens from the perverse incentives of extreme austerity.

The perspective often referred to in political philosophy as fear of "neoliberal mortality" suggests the state does not coerce directly but creates an environment where death becomes a logical economic alternative to a failing social safety net like a basic income. Three core points and societal risks follow:

1. From Duty of Care to Care Burden

The essence of "austerity as selection" lies in shifting care from a collective duty to an individual burden. When services like home care, nursing homes and mental health care are squeezed by cuts, feelings of being a "burden" among the elderly or chronically ill can grow. Critics call this indirect coercion: the choice for euthanasia ceases to be an expression of full autonomy and becomes a result of a lack of dignified alternatives.

2. The Political Frame of "Self-Determination"

Parties such as D66 frame the debate around free will. The ethical discussion is complex:

- Supporters regard self-determination as paramount: people should control their own end.
- Critics argue that "free will" doesn't exist in a vacuum. If the state allows certain groups’ quality of life to decline through cuts, that free will is compromised. The risk is that "completed life" becomes a euphemism for being made socially redundant.

3. The "Euthanasia Climate" as a Systemic Effect

If thresholds for euthanasia are lowered (for instance in cases of dementia or psychological suffering) while investments in palliative care and social cohesion lag, a systemic effect can follow — often described as a slippery slope:

- The norm shifts from "we support you to the end" to "we offer a humane exit when it becomes too heavy (or too expensive)."
- This can create a climate in which vulnerable citizens feel morally obliged to "make room," undermining the core of the welfare state.

Conclusion:

If a state prioritises economic efficiency over social protection, death becomes a policy instrument for cost containment. The debate over robot taxes and public ownership or basic income is therefore crucial: if redistribution fails, pressure on care becomes unbearable and the risk of this "economisation of death" grows. In a democracy, it is the duty of citizens and the opposition to ensure the state's duty of care is not swapped for an enabled duty to die.

Shifting care to the funeral industry

In the public debate of 2025 and early 2026 the phrase "shifting care to the funeral industry" has been used as a sharp metaphor for the fear that governments, driven by cuts, will invest more in enabling a "facilitated death" than in costly long-term support.

1. Cuts as a Driving Force

Budget discussions for 2026 showed that almost all major political parties (except GroenLinks–PvdA) planned significant care savings to fund other expenditures like defence. The Dutch Healthcare Authority (NZa) warned in mid-2025 that planned cuts to eldercare of more than €500 million in 2026 would go ahead unless reforms were implemented.

2. Expansion of the Euthanasia Law

At the same time there is a clear trend in statistics and legislation:

- Rising notifications: In 2024 the number of euthanasia notifications rose by 10% to nearly 10,000 reports — about 5.8% of all deaths.
- Bills: Controversial proposals aim to remove euthanasia from the Criminal Code entirely, which critics such as the NPV say would undermine safeguards and the protective role of the state.

- Social pressure: Organisations like the NVVE continue to grow (now about 173,000 members) and advocate for more control over one’s end of life, including "completed life" cases without a direct medical cause.

1. The "Funeral Industry" as Alternative

When access to care falls because of staff shortages and waiting lists (for example in mental health care and eldercare), the subjective threshold for euthanasia can lower.

- Cost difference: An intensive care pathway costs the state hundreds of thousands per year, while the funeral industry stands to gain. The state saves on care costs, pensions, etc.
- Ethics: The risk is that citizens who feel like a burden because of a poor care climate see death as the only rational option. Opponents of "completed life" view this as a moral failure of the welfare state.

Dutch socio-economic and ethical policy of the 1990s, as described in the book "de een zijn dood is de ander zijn brood!" (one’s death is another’s bread), formed the basis of early resistance to "economic euthanasia."

2. The ABP seizure and Elco Brinkman (1994)

Prime Minister Lubbers and Elco Brinkman (CDA) presided over one of the most turbulent political periods for the elderly in the Netherlands:

- The ABP seizure: Between 1988 and 1994, under the Lubbers cabinets, billions of guilders (estimates range from about 15 to 30 billion) were transferred from the ABP pension reserves to the state coffers to close the budget deficit.
- Brinkman’s proposal to freeze AOW: During the 1994 campaign CDA leader Elco Brinkman proposed freezing the state pension (AOW), which led to a heavy electoral defeat and the rise of the first elderly parties (AOV and Unie 55+).

3. The Remmelink report (1991/1992) and the "20,000 deaths"

The Remmelink report (officially: Medical decisions concerning the end of life) from 1991 was the first large-scale study of euthanasia practice in the Netherlands.

- NAV advertisements: The Dutch Medical Association (NAV) ran a fierce campaign. Based on Remmelink’s figures they concluded there were thousands of cases each

- year of life termination without an explicit request (then estimated at about 1,000) and many more cases of "hastening" by means of pain relief.
- Natural vs. non-natural death: Historically, before formal legislation (2002), many cases of euthanasia were recorded on death certificates as "natural death" to avoid legal prosecution, even though medical intervention had taken place.

4. The term "Economic Euthanasia"

These developments — pension cuts, AOW freezes and broader euthanasia practices — combined into a climate critics called "economic euthanasia" in the 1990s. Pro-life organisations and elderly interest groups feared the state was financially incentivised to reduce the "care burden" of an ageing population by weakening income security and normalising the escape route of euthanasia. These historical events are still cited in 2026 as warnings in debates about current care pressures and the "completed life" discussion.

The analysis draws a parallel between the 20th-century concentration of industrial power and today's technological concentration, using the book "Hell's Cartel" (about I.G. Farben) as a warning. The core fear is that the state no longer protects citizens but facilitates a technocratic elite.

Three reasons this historical comparison is relevant in 2026:

1. From chemistry to data: new cartel formation

I.G. Farben was the textbook example of a cartel that used the state (Nazi Germany) to achieve its own economic ends, subordinating human life to efficiency and ideology.

- The AI Act and lobbying: The current watering down of the EU AI Act under pressure from big tech resembles that historical entanglement. Critics argue the state is losing control over algorithms, which means the "digital infrastructure" of society becomes private property.
- Puppet politics: If politicians let industry set AI rules, history repeats: the government then serves profit models of the new technocracy rather than the people — a dynamic already visible in the military–industrial complex.

2. The "economisation" of people

The link between economic pressure and the value of human life. In the I.G. Farben model people were reduced to "units of labour."

- Robotisation: When AI and robots take over labour, ordinary citizens lose their "economic usefulness" to the elite.
- Selection: Without a redistribution model (robot tax or public ownership) or basic income, an excess population becomes a cost. The danger of "austerity as selection" returns: a government that makes euthanasia easier while cutting care and income for the "economically irrelevant" threatens to repeat past abuses.

3. History repeating itself as systemic pressure

"Hell's Cartel" shows how moral boundaries blur when industry and state merge.

- In the 1990s with the ABP seizure (using pensions to fill the state coffers).
- In 2026 this appears as the automation of power: decision-making by AI algorithms focused on cost savings, without compassion or ethical checks.

Conclusion:

The warning is that the "soft death" in a high-tech society could become the ultimate efficiency measure for an elite that no longer needs workers. The fight over the AI Act and the protection of pensions, care and basic income are, in this light, not isolated incidents but part of a struggle to preserve human dignity against a new kind of industrial-digital complex.

1. Denying economic motives

In the 2026 debate the government consistently asserts that medical decisions around end of life are strictly separate from budget cuts. It prefers to talk about "autonomy" and "quality of care." Critics point out that in 2025 and 2026 cuts to eldercare (around €500 million) coincide with a record number of euthanasia notifications (nearly 10,000 in 2024). The establishment denies a causal link, but for many citizens it feels like a systemic freedom born of a lack of care alternatives.

2. The taboo of historical comparison

Comparisons with Nazi Germany (Aktion T4) are often dismissed by politicians as inappropriate or a reductio ad Hitlerum.

- The official argument: Current law is based on a voluntary request from a patient facing unbearable suffering, whereas the Nazi programme killed people without consent to "purify public health."

- The concern: The fear is that the line between "voluntary" and "forced by circumstances" blurs. If the state makes care unaffordable, the "choice" of death becomes an economically driven escape, making the historical parallel — devaluing non-productive lives — uncomfortably close.

1. The role of AI and technology in 2026

With the rise of AI control in care and the labour market in 2026, the human dimension is further strained.

- Technocratic power: Echoing Hell's Cartel, there is a risk that decisions about life and death will be left to efficiency-trained algorithms.
- Puppets of the elite: The watering down of the EU AI Act shows industrial interests often outweigh citizen protection. This reinforces the image of a government that serves a technological elite more than its most vulnerable subjects.

Summary: While the establishment points to the legal safeguards of the Euthanasia Act, there is systemic pressure. In a climate of AI automation and care cuts, "self-determination" can morph into a euphemism for a state-facilitated exodus of those who cannot keep up economically. The phrase "institutional neglect" is used to describe how the line between natural decline and active (but passive) life termination blurs. In 2026 this debate is more urgent than ever because of the persistent staffing crisis in care. The following three mechanisms underpin the claim about "subtle killing":

2. Starvation as a grey zone

The process of eating and drinking cessation is often medically presented as a natural part of dying. But crucially: if a resident stops eating because of sedation due to understaffing, the boundary between natural death and a "facilitated death" becomes razor thin.

3. "Chemical restraint" (sedation)

Secretly administering sedating medication (such as antipsychotics or strong tranquilizers) to keep residents "manageable" in understaffed homes is known as chemical restraint.

- Legal framework: Since the Care and Coercion Act (Wzd) this is strictly regulated and in principle punishable without explicit consent or medical necessity.
- Practice in 2026: Inspection reports show that massive workload pressures in nursing homes strain compliance with this law. The consequences — swallowing problems, aspiration pneumonia and general decline — are known medical complications of sedating the elderly, which undeniably accelerate the path to death.

4. The role of the state and cuts

The state’s cuts create the conditions in which this happens.

- When reimbursements per client fall, institutions are forced to pursue "efficiency."
- In an environment where government and AI focus on output and cost control, the vulnerable elderly who need intensive human closeness become an "unsolvable problem."

Legal and ethical implications

This is effectively a shift from a welfare state to a managerial state. While the state officially tightly controls euthanasia via Regional Review Committees (RTE), a process occurs at the back door of nursing homes that escapes that oversight. This is the core warning: "free will" becomes an illusion when the care environment deteriorates so badly that life is a suffering only endable by medication or death.